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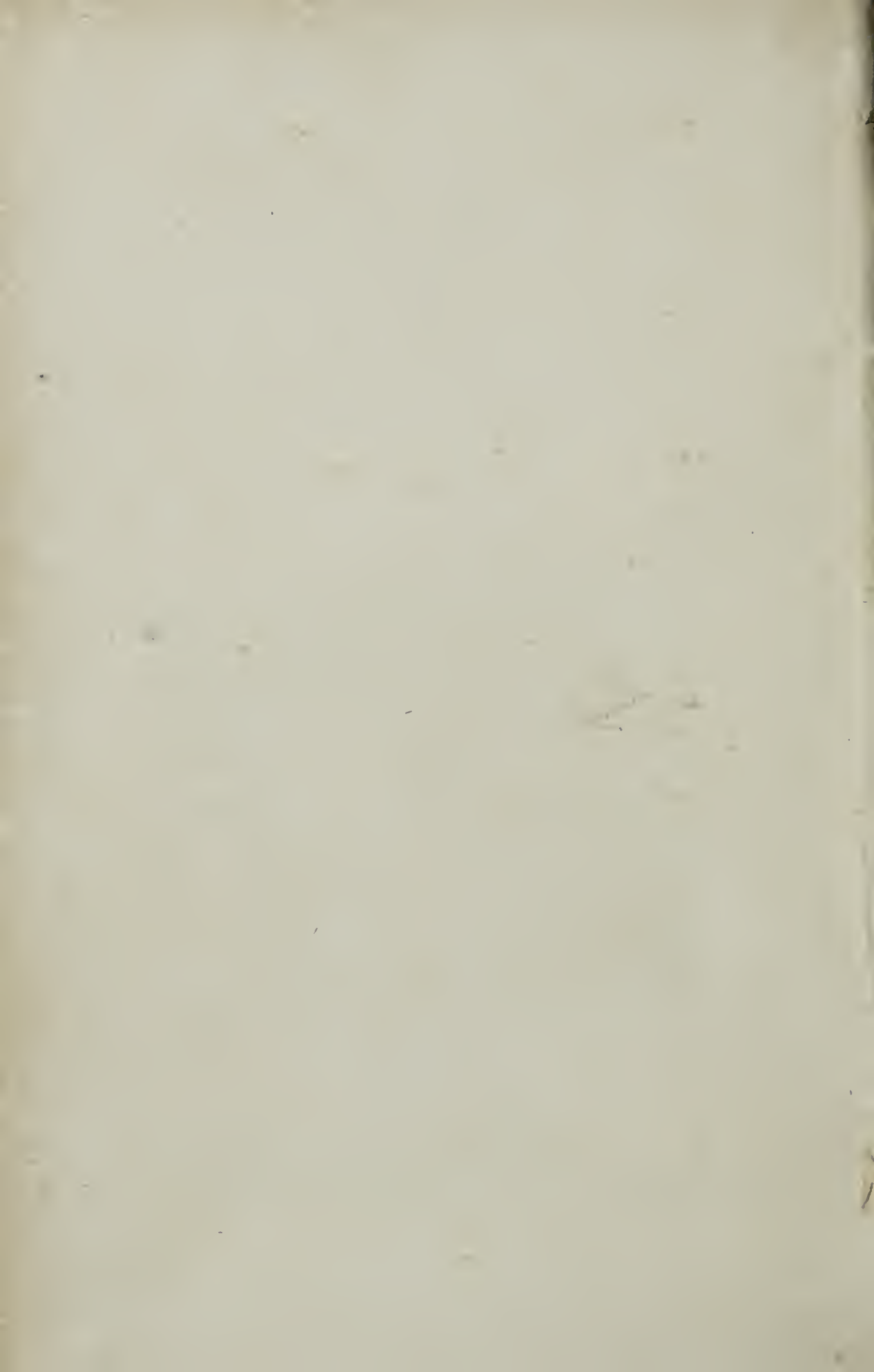
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Predestination and election

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PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION

VINDICATED FROM

DEPENDENCE ON MORAL NECESSITY,

AND RECONCILED WITH

FREEWILL AND A UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT;

PRECEDED BY AN ANSWER

TO

THE SYSTEM OF EDWARDS.

BY GEORGE M'CLELLAND.

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ERRATA.

- Page 14, line 20, for "differences," read "difference."
 ,, 47, line 10, for "and Chalmers exactly, this reasoning,"
 read "and Chalmers, exactly this reasoning."
 ,, 53, lines 5-6, for "confers," read "confer."
 ,, 102, line 3, delete "will of God to create the;" and, line
 7, after "to us," insert, "as to their relation to the
 will of God, as their source."
 ,, 202, line 27, for "reality in," read "reality of."
 ,, 207, line 14, for "atonement of," read "atonement for."

INTRODUCTION.

DR CHALMERS, as is strongly stated in the Lectures on Predestination, published under his name,* justly regards the maintenance of that doctrine, as identical with the maintenance of God's sovereignty over his intelligent creatures. He rests the proof of predestination on the argument for Moral Necessity, contained in the Inquiry of President Edwards, which he adopts with expressions of high, and even extreme, approbation. "There is no doctrine," he says,

* Five Lectures on Predestination, by the Rev. Thomas Chalmers, D.D., delivered before the University of Edinburgh. Selected from "The Pulpit." Third Edition.

I have, in illustration of the subject discussed in the earlier part of this work, made some quotations from these Lectures, although, apparently, not published under Dr Chalmers' authority; because their accuracy has not, so far as I know, been ever called in question, and it is supported by strong internal evidence. As they are professedly in explanation and defence of the system of Edwards, and appear to have had an extensive circulation, notice of them, in an examination of the grounds of that system, could hardly be omitted. The reader will find, however, that none of the questions of interest discussed in the following pages, depend on the quotations from these Lectures.

“capable of being more satisfactorily demonstrated.”

“Edwards is by far the greatest name the new world can boast. He has made an achievement which has distanced all the labours of all the schools of Europe.”

On the supposition of Moral Necessity being untrue, the consequence, it is intimated, would be absolute confusion among God’s works, in which case, “never was there exhibited a more disjointed and tumultuous government; and never have we read of a more degraded and insulted Sovereign.” “If man be not a necessary agent, God is a degraded Sovereign.”

Of the doctrine of Moral Necessity, held to be essential for establishing a truth so momentous, we find, in the second Lecture, the following statement:—“There is a third difficulty, which I presume not to resolve, and which I believe no human being *can resolve; thereconciliation of the whole argument with the moral nature of God.*” It ought to follow, that an argument, which cannot be reconciled with God’s moral nature, must be ill-founded, or, at least, cannot be held of any value, until this difficulty be satisfactorily cleared away. But no: the argument is adhered to, as the sole and the irrefragible proof of the Divine Predestination and Sovereignty. The difficulty is met thus:—“As in the doctrine of the origin of evil, we believe there are two facts equally true; and yet we cannot say how they are related to each other. Up to this point I see no difficulty; but it comes at length to the question, ‘who art thou that repliest

against God?’ The doctrine of Predestination is not the only one in this situation. There are innumerable others, in which the same result is arrived at.” This answer appears not satisfactory. The case is not that of an intellectual paradox, where we can believe both of two apparently irreconcilable conclusions. It is a case of moral inconsistency. The “two facts” are,—the one, that we believe God to be “holy, just and good;” and the other, that there is an alleged demonstration of His ways in creation, which we are unable to reconcile with his being “holy, just and good.” We cannot believe both of these. The origin of evil is a paradox, only on the footing of God’s action in regard to it not being understood; but the admission of moral necessity leaves us no longer ignorant of this. His connection with it then becomes known, but in a way, it is acknowledged, which seems irreconcilable with his righteousness.

The fact, that a man, so pious and so able as Dr Chalmers, permitted to rest together in his mind, conclusions so incongruous, is to be accounted for by the difference between the intellectual and the spiritual parts of our nature, which will form the subject of particular consideration in the sequel, in reference to the system of Edwards. He appears to have unwarily got entangled in the national snare, of pleading a question of the spirit in the incompetent tribunal of the understanding, and to have held himself bound

by a judgment arrived at through inapplicable principles. There is, throughout the Lectures, on account of the irreconcilable elements in the argument for moral necessity, an oscillation between the confident assertion of its strength and value, and yet anxiety to keep out of sight, and even to explain away, the conclusion for which alone it is adduced and prized, which is not a little inconsistent and puzzling. The quotations already given show the Doctor's sense of the importance of the argument. How can they be reconciled with the following? "My object is not so much to prove its truth, as to show its innocence; not so much to place it among the dogmata of a creed, as to shew that, if admitted there, it does no harm, and leaves morality where it found it." And again, "I am much more anxious to prove the innocence of this doctrine, than to prove its truth. I am much less anxious to secure your belief of it, than to prove it will do you no ill." And this is arrived at, by showing, that practically the doctrine of Predestination is never thought of, either in the fulfilment of the active duties of life, or in the pursuit of salvation, and that it is innoxious, by being utterly forgotten. "Is there an embassy of peace from heaven at our door? Is the truth of God staked to our salvation, if we only rely on it? Is its beseeching voice addressed to each? Is His a free offer of forgiveness, and a promise of the Holy Spirit? I would rather that men would treat all the doctrines of Predestination as vagaries, than

not attend to these practical overtures." This burst of true feeling is well; but why should it be necessary to place it against what had just been set forth as the only medium, through which we can reach the conviction of God's sovereignty over men? The impression, made by the strenuous assertion of moral necessity, and the equally strenuous deprecation of it, which occur in turns throughout the Lectures, is, that while moral necessity must be admitted to be essential for securing the divine sovereignty, it was necessary to remove the consciousness of this from men's view, by a deceptive feeling of independence, in order that they might act without embarrassment or oppression of spirit. There must be a vital error somewhere, in a system, which must be thus treated by its defenders, and which involves the admission, that the sense of the sovereignty of the Creator will crush the life of his creatures.

It is singular, that Dr Chalmers should have considered a state of opinion, which carries with it so much difficulty, as highly satisfactory and well-grounded. Yet this appears to have been his decided conviction. The Lectures speak of "many, with Edwards at their head, rejoicing in a light, which carries them over what to others is an impracticable enigma." And, to the same effect, he says, in the Daily Scripture Readings lately published, "The hardening of Pharoah's heart, and yet the aggravation of his guilt, in that it should have been hardened

under the moral appliances brought to bear on it, is to many a profound enigma, from the *perplexities* of which I feel myself to have been freed, by the study of Predestination in connection with Philosophical Necessity."

The distinguished editor (the author of "The Natural History of Enthusiasm") of a modern edition (1831) of Edwards' Inquiry, in his Introductory Essay, while he awards the highest praise to the ability and to the piety of the author, expresses a very different opinion from that of Dr Chalmers of the value of his labours. He speaks of the work as "almost the textbook of infidelity," and, in reference to the importance of the question of Liberty and Necessity to Theology and Christian Doctrine, as having been hitherto universally acquiesced in, he predicts, "that the very next race of divines, our own sons and successors, will reject, as a sheer absurdity, and as a preposterous pedantry, that practice and opinion on this subject, which has stood sanctioned by the approval of all theologians, and all philosophers of all ages." He occupies the chief part of a long essay, with protesting (chiefly, however, for negative reasons only) against the application of the doctrine of Moral Necessity to 1. Common Life, 2. Theology and Christian Doctrine, 3. The Physiology of Man, and, 4. The Higher Metaphysics; as being unnatural, useless, and mischievous. He offers no refutation of the reasonings of Edwards, beyond a *reductio ad absurdum* on the

ground of common sense, as an antidote to Edwards' *reductio ad absurdum* on grounds of logic; and he seems to dissuade others from making the attempt. His objections appear to be just, in reference to the doctrine of Moral Necessity; but they will not apply to that of man's perfect subjection to the sovereignty of God; and if indifference to this fundamental principle were to come in place of its abuse, the exchange would be rather for the worse than the better.

The author of the following little work is conscious of his inability in every way to do justice to the subject. The sentiments of Chalmers make it evident, that the views of Edwards (of whose Inquiry its editor just mentioned says, that, "whatever be its fate in the next age, in the present it holds all its honours and authority") retain much influence in this country. The author sympathises with the repugnance of that editor to the doctrine of Edwards, being convinced that, where it prevails, it, or rather the habit of mind out of which it arises, must, sooner or later, prove destructive to true faith. At the same time, he confesses an equal repugnance to the conclusions of Edwards' opponents, the Arminians, against which Edwards directed his argument; and his own mind is satisfied, that those conclusions may be shewn to be erroneous, consistently with the freedom of the will in the sense rejected by Edwards. The subject

appears still very much an open one; and views, which he is not conscious of having drawn from any previous writer, may not be an unacceptable contribution towards its elucidation.

The author has added to the consideration of the will's freedom, the application of the principles arrived at to the subjects of Predestination, and Election, and the Atonement, as being their natural, and most important practical use. In calling in question the Calvinistic representation of these doctrines, he has taken it as it appears in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is recognised in this country as giving it in the most accurate and comprehensive form.

The author regrets, that the use of expressions and distinctions connected with philosophical views of the mind, will to some extent be unavoidable, from the argument of Edwards being derived from the alleged mode of the mind's operation upon philosophical principles. He thinks it right to explain, that he will use the word "spiritual" in a larger sense than that at present common in this country. The "spirit," properly speaking, is a form of being, and represents a condition of consciousness, which, in modern philosophy, is distinguished from the conceptions of the mere "understanding." On the one hand, we are formed like the Source of all life and truth, and, through this character of our being, we are capable of the consciousness of truth, in its universal and ab-

solute forms ; this, in the primary sense, is the “spirit.” On the other hand, we are, by the body, connected with the world of material nature, and receive from it, by sensation, a multitude of impressions, which we can abstract, generalize, combine and compare, by the “understanding ;” the conjunction in one creature of what is derived from both sources, being the special character of humanity. This corresponds with the scriptural distinction of man into “body, soul, and spirit.” The limited use of the word, “spiritual,” which makes it synonymous with holy, or evangelically pure, is sometimes found in Scripture. But the formal description just quoted, the mention of filthiness of spirit, as well as of flesh, and of spiritual wickedness, the marked distinction taken in 1 Cor. xiv. 14-15, and much besides in the Scriptures, shew that the sacred writers regarded “spiritual,” in the full sense of the word, as fitted to denote, not a mere quality, but a substantive character of being, which might be evil, as well as good. The progress of German philosophy has unhappily proved, that the very highest evil may arise from the abuse of the spiritual forms of truth.

CHAPTER I.

IMPORT OF MORAL NECESSITY.

EDWARDS has brought an obscurity into the discussion of the subject, by omitting an inquiry into the nature of a moral act of the will, on which the right solution of the question of the will's freedom depends. In this respect his work appears as faulty as that of Locke is now admitted to be, as to the nature of ideas, in his discussion regarding their origin. It will, on this account, be necessary, in the outset, to define clearly the nature and the sphere of a moral act of the will. The importance of this will appear from an explanation of the sense, in which Edwards holds, that the acts of the will are subject to moral necessity.

The effective choice to do or to abstain from doing any thing, which is the substance of an act of will, Edwards considers a simple state of the mind, which comes into existence on the occurrence of circumstances sufficient to give rise to it; the choice so made, whatever it be, being no doubt voluntary, but at the

same time necessary or certain for the man. Edwards maintains, that an act of will may be voluntary, and yet necessary; and that voluntary is opposed, not to necessary, but to constrained or coerced. But he wholly denies, that an act of will is self-originated, or self-determined, through any interior operation of the will; and maintains, that so to speak is not merely erroneous, but a gross absurdity. The supposed demonstration of this forms the leading argument of his work. He, at the same time, objects to its being said, that an act of will, according to his view, takes place inevitably, or without the man's power to prevent it; for as the act is one, in which the man's full consent and choice are present, it is incongruous to imagine any counter choice or will on his part, which is or can be frustrated by the necessity of his act; an observation which is perfectly just, supposing an act of will to be of a simple character, in the full sense ascribed to it by Edwards, and which strikingly illustrates the necessity, under which he holds such acts to take place. He farther maintains, that, by virtue of the necessity, or certainty of sequence, according to which acts of will are done, they are subject to the law of Cause and Effect; which he represents as being of universal application in creation, otherwise events would pass from under the regulating Providence of God, and would rest on mere contingency, becoming altogether fluctuating and uncertain, and the sport of chance.

We have, in this system, the following elements presented to us:—1. a mind capable of willing; 2. circumstances giving it occasion to will; 3. an act of will taking place, and, 4. the character of necessity, or determined certainty, affixed to the process and the result, arising from the pre-established relation between the mind and the circumstances. By representing the result as necessary, Edwards does not mean to state the mere truism,—that “what happens, does happen,”—without explaining the reason, which would have been to acknowledge, that no reason could be given; but he means to give a substantial reason for the result; which is, that it arises necessarily from the influencing power of the motive upon the actual or physical constitution of the mind exposed to it; or, what is the same thing, from the reaction of the mind, according to its actual or physical constitution, to the power of the motive. Plainly, “physical” and “moral,” must, by this system, have substantially the same meaning, in reference to the point at issue.

It may be noticed, that there is a difficulty in keeping before the mind the exact question in dispute, from the circumstance, that the maintainers of the will’s freedom, and the maintainers of its being subject to necessity, may describe its operation in words exactly the same, and yet mean the very opposite of each other. The latter class contend that necessity exists under forms of consciousness and action, which

the former class hold to involve freedom; an opinion which the latter class regard as ascribing to those forms a latitude of effect, not only not necessarily implied in them, but in itself unintelligible and absurd.

In illustration of this, it may be pointed out, that the leading position of Edwards, (Part I. § 2.), "that the will always is as the greatest apparent good, or, as what appears most agreeable to us," does not determine the question. Both parties may adopt it. It merely declares, that "what happens, does happen," without assigning any reason for it. The point remains open,—how does the man, whose will is so moved, come by the conviction of what is good or agreeable? Is it through an existing but passive quality, liable to be excited, and now excited, by a cause fit to do so? Or, is it through an active power of self-determination, in the conviction of the difference between good and evil, of the exercise of which the conviction is the result?

It appears to me, that the differences between the two systems may be expressed unequivocally in two ways; at least, I am not aware of any middle way between those to be now stated. The necessarian system asserts, that, in a course of events leading from a certain beginning to a known end, the links of which have consisted partly of the moral volitions of men, and partly of occurrences in external nature, the whole course alike is under the same necessity by constitution and operation, the difference between the

two kinds of links, *as to the question of necessity*, being only circumstantial, and not essential; while the maintainers of freewill altogether deny this view of the case. And, on the other hand, the maintainers of freewill hold, that there is an essential difference between the links, *as to that question*, because there belongs to the will a power of self-determination in regard to moral volitions; which the necessarians deny, and allege to be an unintelligible absurdity.

Is it then true, that the moral nature of man is a passive subject, liable to have the energy of will belonging to it excited by causes fit to do so, and under necessity to yield to those causes? Is man's action through his will, a mere link in a quasi-mechanical chain of Cause and Effect? And is he but the blind instrument for producing a fixed result,—all the more blind, that his act, whether good or evil, *necessarily* meets his own acquiescence at the time, and is *chosen* by him? Is it the only difference between inanimate matter, and the spirit of man, in regard to susceptibility of change from the influence of external causes, that the former is void of consciousness, while the latter is possessed of it; so that the knife impelled in an act of murder, and the mind which directs the hand that holds it, are under the same necessity;—with this only difference, that the animate instrument belongs to a creature, subject to the play of passions, and the counteraction, though in this instance without avail, of impressions of reason and truth, consciously indeed,

but with an operation, whose degree and effect are as necessary, as when the wind brings sounds of pity or alarm from the strings of an Eolian harp? Or, on the contrary, has moral liberty a meaning far larger than the mere freedom of the man from external coercion? And does it mean a self-determining power in the moral agent, through which he creates his end, the ground of his action?

The system of Edwards, as I understand it, asserts the affirmative of the former class of these questions, and the negative of the latter. Edwards, therefore, is quite consistent when he objects to the term *free-will*, as being unmeaning,—the will being, by his system, merely the faculty of chusing according to the prevailing influence, which necessitates the result with the same certainty, as that with which a magnet draws to it a bit of iron.

Such are the questions, the just solution of which we have now to attempt; with which view it will be necessary to begin with ascertaining, what really is a moral act of will.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE AND SPHERE OF A MORAL ACT OF WILL.

WHAT we have to do with in this inquiry, is the will of man, a rational and moral being; himself created, with faculties of various kinds in his mixed corporeal and incorporeal nature, by means of which he feels, judges, and acts; and who finds all beings external to himself, and their properties, also already created or existing. Though the inquiry may be held to relate to the power of action generally, that belongs to us, yet its special object is our *moral* liberty,—that is, the character of our actions, in so far as they infer responsibility to God, as being morally good or evil. We cannot judge of liberty in this sense, by reference primarily to our acts among the outward things of creation. The moral element in an action is quite different from what is done externally; and, in order to find it, it must be carefully separated from this, and considered apart, in the light of the relation between the actor and his Creator. It is remarkable, that in the work of Edwards, though

expressly intended to elucidate doctrines of religion, the question is never considered in this point of view; nor is any distinction taken between an action, in its moral aspect, and an action, as the exercise of mere voluntary power for any or for no end. What he professes to examine is the nature of action by the will generally; and the instance which he selects for special analysis (Part ii., § 6) is the act of touching at random one of the squares of a chess-board, unconnected with any moral object or consequence whatever, unless it be the banishment from the mind of every such thought, in order to surrender it, as he expresses it, to *accident*, that is, to whatever casual impression might come upon it from any quarter. Dr Chalmers has taken the case of the offer of a sweet and a sour apple for eating, for establishing by its analysis the truth of Edwards' theory.

I do not doubt, that there is an element of independent action from within, in every act of will. It seems, indeed, that this is the characteristic, which distinguishes life from the mere passive powers, found in inanimate substances, and that unmixed mechanism belongs only to such substances. But it is according to Divine wisdom, to exhibit gradations of powers in creation, from the lowest to the highest forms. There is a difference in kind between vegetable and animal life. There seems to be the same between some of the qualities in the highest, compared with the mere sensitive and assimilative func-

tions in the lowest, of the animals. There is certainly such a difference, between the highest endowment of animals, and the spiritual nature in man. It follows, that there must be like differences in the character of the will, where it exists; for the will cannot but derive its character from the ground in the nature of the being which possesses it, out of which the act of willing proceeds. Intellectual, moral, and spiritual powers would be given in vain, unless the faculty of voluntary action in the being in whom they are, corresponded with them, and involved a responsibility according to their nature.

Neither do I doubt, that, from the unity of his being, there is a moral element in every action of man. But in man's acts outwardly among other creatures, this element will be combined with similar elements to those, that enter into the exercise of will in lower natures. Besides, in all cases, the moral character of an action, outwardly, requires an ultimate reference to the will of the Creator, the source and object of moral action. When, therefore, as is the practice of Edwards, no distinction is made, but, on the contrary, the moral element is unheeded, or never specially treated, and the attention is turned merely to the character of the act as an outward act, the nature of the act of will, in its peculiarity as the human will, will be lost sight of, and necessarily remain undiscovered.

The objection to Edwards' mode of treating the

question goes, indeed, even much deeper than what has been stated. He never contemplates an act of will, in its peculiar character, as the product of the power of life, in any case; as an act from within, and not a mere relation outwards. He attempts no analysis of its elements in their sources, whether in the lower or the higher forms. He relies on a logical demonstration *a priori* and *ad absurdum*, that no such thing as power from within is conceivable; and on its strength, he dispenses with the investigation of the facts. In consequence, his work presents no views of human life or character, and gives no insight into the working of the conscience or the heart. Its object rather is, to supersede all such considerations, by the balancings of lifeless abstractions. If it shall appear, as it is anticipated it will, that the conditions of Edwards' propositions are quite inapplicable to the question, there will remain nothing else to meet, and the whole reasonings will fall to the ground, as a set of acute, but pointless, logical exercises.

I proceed to consider the nature and the sphere of a moral act of will.

Morals are too often treated, as if good and evil were moral conditions, which may exist in man, regarded in himself, as separate from, and without reference to God, and be made the subjects of experience and contemplation as such. But the duty of obedience towards God is the key of morality. All moral powers and qualities,—such as, love, fear, trust, sense of obli-

gation and truth, and the like,—are clustered round this, as the centre whence they derive their life and meaning. It is impossible that any moral creature, and more especially such a creature after a fall and redemption, can possess these attributes as absolute qualities. Man was created in the image of God, as the destined revealer of His excellencies, and the minister of His will, among the works of creation; a destiny not frustrated, but made capable of more perfect fulfilment, in consequence of the fall and redemption. More especially in the fallen state, which is the state with which we have to do, sense of absolute dependence, trust, gratitude, service and obedience, towards God, are essential constituents of the upright conditions of man's mind, and must penetrate and inform every one of his good thoughts and volitions, in order to give them the character of goodness. Without these, any supposed goodness would have falsehood,—both in its subject, the conscious intelligent mind, which would possess as its own what comes and is to be held as from the Creator,—and in its witness, which would declare the goodness an inherent quality of the creature, instead of a gift from above. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” The creaturehood, the sonship, the absolute support, and the redemption, the trust committed, and the representative standing, the supreme honour claimed for and due to the Creator, before whom all other names

must be forgotten,—these all connect man's goodness with *conscious dependence and obedience towards God*, as indispensable qualities of it. On the other hand, what lies at the bottom of moral evil or sin, is attempted *independence and disobedience towards God*,—comprehending under them, want of faith towards Him, regardlessness or forgetfulness of Him, want of fear or thought of His laws or of His approbation, pursuit of our own ends, whether commendable in the esteem of the natural man, or the reverse, by means of our own choosing, without regard to God's will as our law, or to Himself, as the only right end of our thoughts and actions. All these are so many features of independence and disobedience,—the condition of a creature, broke loose from subjection to his Creator, and living as if he were his own master; in which state moral goodness cannot characterise any of his thoughts, words, or actions, but every one of them must be wholly sinful, because they flow from a corrupted fountain, disjoined from the Living Source.

Let us now analyse two actions, the one morally evil, and the other morally good, in order to discover their moral element. At the fall of man, the character of Eve's transgression cannot be understood by its being merely said, that she yielded to the temptation of the outward inducement, and the imagined consequential benefit, "that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise." This is but the description of an external

action, combined with that of the state of mind of the actor *in reference to it*. But, preceding the external action, another process had taken place in Eve's mind, inner and deeper, to which the outward temptation afforded only the occasion of its occurrence, and to which the outward action gave but clothing and expression, wherein she had before her the option, whether God's will, or her own in opposition to it, was to be paramount, and had admitted the fatal conclusion, that the former need not be so, but that her own might be allowed to supersede it, by chusing a good it had forbidden. Again, on the occasion of Abraham's call to sacrifice Isaac, the ultimate motive of Abraham's conduct was, that having before him God's will on the one hand, and personal and external interests of great force opposed to it, on the other, it was the principle and resolution of his mind to adhere to the former, in preference to all opposite influences. Thus, ascending to the region, where we can examine the moral ends of men's actions, those views which are their ultimate inducements and true causes, we find, in both the cases before mentioned, an act of the will, anterior (at least in point of conception and power of causation) to all outward action,—that is, the act of choice between God's will and man's—which takes place in the conscience, and is purely a spiritual act, and which points out the sphere, wherein alone moral liberty can be understood.

This act of the will, existing in the spirit anterior

to and productive of outward action, chusing between God's will and a contradictory will in us, declares the principle of multitudes of resolutions of the will, which exist separately from outward action throughout the whole details of life. Obedience and respect to ordinances, domestic, social, political, and religious,—the subjection of the corporeal to the spiritual, embracing temperance, chastity, diligence, and orderliness,—the exercise of righteousness, and mercy,—faith and worship towards God,—in short, the whole circle of moral duties, to ourselves, to our neighbour, and to God,—imply a moral election of the kind before described; which, however, has true life and power, in all its instances, only when regarded as an application or consequence, immediately or mediately, of the central principle, that we thereby acknowledge and fulfil our obligation to adopt the will of God, as the rule of our own. In like manner, transgression in these respects derives its evil from the disobedience to God's will involved in it. Such acts of the will are not the less real as spiritual acts, and not the less independent, as to their moral character, of action among outward things, that they are often, perhaps usually, conjoined in point of time with outward acts, or the contemplation of them. They form, nevertheless, an inner and distinct spiritual reality, which finds expression and birth in the outward actions, and constitutes their righteousness or their sin,—Rom. iv. 15.

The embracing by the mind of moral truth or

moral falsehood, appears thus the sphere for the exercise of moral freedom of will. From moral truth of heart and soul,—that is, submitting our wills to the will of God, as the rule of our thoughts and actions,—and from moral falsehood there,—that is, substituting for this our own ends of whatever sort,—have proceeded as sources, all the good and the evil actions, which have ever been done in the world. The question to be resolved is,—what is the nature of the act of a man, in chusing the truth or the falsehood? We suppose them both present to his mind, as subjects of contemplation,—obedience to God's will, with the sense of the duty which requires it, and the indulgence of his own opposite will, with the gratification expected to accompany it; and one of these is at last adopted by him, or willed. Is this act necessary in its character; or is it the result of self-determination within the will itself?

CHAPTER III.

A MORAL ACT OF THE WILL SELF-DETERMINED, AND
NOT NECESSARY.

WE have seen, that the question truly before the mind, at the time of performing a moral act of will, is,—whether the man will make God, or himself, the centre or end of his action? The external temptation, prompting to an outward act, merely gives occasion to the conflict between the claims of the two wills. The conflict is wholly within the man's spirit, and must be determined there, anterior to any outward action. Such questions are termed questions of conscience.

Another, and perhaps the more correct way of expressing the moral question raised in the spirit by an external temptation, is,—whether the man will separate himself from his spiritual unity with God, or not? The very existence of a question of conscience, in the form of a struggle against the truth, and a painful effort to set it aside, and, as it were, reject it from our being, is a witness within us, that, by God's grace,

such a unity exists in man's original constitution. It is the active sin of fallen man to break this unity in the truth of his spirit, which, conscience tells him, is his upright condition, and continually to place himself in the unnatural and wicked state, of being separate from God, pursuing his own ends in imagined independence.

The power of moral self-determination is the man's ability, by his will, to place himself in either he pleases of the two conditions of spirit before mentioned. Having both within his power, with the consciousness of the qualities of right and wrong attaching to them, he may either righteously rest in obedience to and unity with God, or wickedly depart from this, and adopt his own will as his end. The decision is self-determined; that is, is the independent act of the man's will. It is not the consequence of any thing other than the will itself. The will, or the man by his will, is the causer of the result, by creating the end of action,—that is, the resolution to hold God the end, or himself instead. It is therefore a contradiction to ask, what is the cause of the will so acting? The very nature of the will's operation in such an act, from the description of it, is to be self-originating; and hence the operation is inscrutable. The will is not inanimate or merely passive; it is a power, living, conscious, and self-reflective, able to look into itself, and make a motive of itself, or of a good it chuses for the sake of itself, and to use its own

conclusion, its own resolution of what is good and fitting, as the end of its action. Such is the essential character of will, in the spiritual form of being, or life in its highest, or morally self-conscious form.

The power of moral will is generically different from all other forms of consciousness.

It differs from the operation of Cause and Effect, in having no cause separate from itself, and in being in its own essence, a cause. In cases of cause and effect, there is a distinct cause, on which the effect is necessarily dependent. But in the moral action of the will, the occasion merely stirs a question within the man himself, and has no causal connection with his determination. The will is itself the actor, the cause ; and it cannot justly be represented as the subject of a cause out of itself, and its state the effect. It is a figure of speech to say, that an external motive, as a cause, overcomes a man to sin. He *yields* to an evil motive, and voluntarily *subjects* himself to its power, contrary to his higher convictions, which deal with the interior question, whether he is to obey God, or himself. All this is quite different from the operation of the ordinary law of Cause and Effect.

It differs from the consciousness of intellectual abstractions and generalizations, and of their connections and consequences, in having the moral relations of persons, the obligations of conscience, and the sense of duty, inseparably joined to its exercise, as resulting from its being the independent

action of the whole man ; whereas this is but the contemplation of the passive relations of mental conceptions, with judgments on the perceived and equally passive consequences.

And it differs from mere emotional experience, in being active and self-governing, while this is passive, as is indicated by the names, Passion and Emotion.

It follows from what has been explained regarding the moral will, that it is quite inadequate to term it merely a faculty of man's nature. It expresses the character of our nature in its highest state, that of a spirit ; a form of being, complete and substantive both for action and responsibility. In man's original constitution, the image of God did not stand only in reason, knowledge, truth, and pure affections, but also in freewill ; that is, the power of chusing, not only what to do, but the moral end for which to do it ; on which account this power, as found in man, is rightly termed, not simply will, which may be the blind executor of an impulse, or the blind yielder to a motive, but freewill. Freewill expresses the active or administrative character of the image of God in us ; the others are the suitable and indispensable attributes attached to it, according to which it acts. So viewed, the will is essentially, *the man*, having those attributes as the qualities of his nature ; the man, the spiritually reflective and active being, moral, rational, and intelligent, and, consequently, responsible.

The conclusion appears to be this,—if the moral acts

of the will of man have the character of necessity, the necessity must appear in one of the forms, in which our consciousness and experience give us examples of necessary action. The production of effects from causes, the relations of intellectual abstractions and generalizations, and the consequences thence deducible, and the existence and excitement of passions and emotions, are all necessary, in senses, which would warrant the conclusion of Edwards in regard to the moral will, if the same could be substantiated as to its mode of operation. Is, then, any one of these, or the combination of part or of all of them, sufficient to account for what we are conscious of, when we make a moral election between obedience to the will of God, and our own? The case is evidently far otherwise. The moral will acts with an uncaused, and therefore responsible, independence, which cannot be so explained. Its action is in spiritual freedom, a mode of action entirely *sui generis*; at the same time not only perfectly conceivable, but the subject of constant experience; for no man can miss the consciousness of it, when he thinks of his duty in its highest relation, the light of his conscience towards God.

Freewill, therefore, is independent of external causes. Its relation to divine grace will be considered in the sequel.

CHAPTER IV.

EXAMINATION OF, AND ANSWERS TO THE ARGUMENTS
OF EDWARDS AND DR CHALMERS AGAINST FREE-
WILL, AND REASONS IN SUPPORT OF IT.

THE conclusion, mentioned at the close of the preceding chapter, is repudiated by the school of Edwards, and regarded as being reduced to an absurdity by his argument. His demonstration, which is reiterated to weariness throughout his Treatise, may be held as fairly set forth in the following extract from Part II. § 1.:—

“ If the will determines all its own free acts, the soul determines all the free acts of the will, in the exercise of a power of willing and chusing; or, which is the same thing, it determines them of choice, it determines its own acts by chusing its own acts. If the will determines the will, then choice orders and determines the choice; and acts of choice are subject to the decision, and follow the conduct, of other acts of choice. And, therefore, if the will determines all its own free acts, then every free

act of choice is determined by a preceding act of choice, choosing that act. And if that preceding act of the will or choice be also a free act, then, by these principles, in this act too the will is self-determined; that is, this, in like manner, is an act that the soul voluntarily chooses; or, which is the same thing, it is an act determined still by a preceding act of the will choosing that. And the like again may be observed of the last mentioned act. Which brings us directly to a contradiction; for it supposes an act of the will preceding the first act in the whole train, directing and determining the rest; or a free act of the will, before the last free act of the will. Or else we must come at last to an act of the will, determining the consequent acts, wherein the will is not self-determined, and so is not a free act, in this notion of freedom. But if the first act in the train, determining and fixing the rest, be not free, none of them all can be free."

Dr Chalmers holds this argument to be decisive of the question. In order to present an abstruse point in as intelligible a shape as possible, I shall quote from the first Lecture a somewhat long passage, giving the argument the advantage of the Doctor's expressive and popular style: "What causes the act? The answer is obvious,—a volition. But the question is equally competent,—what caused the *volition*? Our opponents say, it was the self-determining power of the will; and when they close on this argument, we

think the necessitarian takes a position, which is quite impregnable. If, as the defenders of liberty say, it was the self-determining power of the will, then it was the will that caused it; so that the will gave rise, not only to the action, but to the volition which preceded it. This volition must have had something which determined it, or there would have been chusing without a choice; so that this volition must have been preceded by another. By the necessitarians, one volition is deemed sufficient; but this 'self-determining power of the will' obliges us to recur to two; one near the action, or its parent; the other contiguous to it, or its grandfather. But it would be absurd to say of this predecessor, that it came uncaused. Either it was *in* the will, or *out* of it. If out of it, that is all we contend for; if in it, then (as there can be no determination without a determining power) we must proceed to another prior step. Each act must not only have a parent in one volition, but a grandfather in another, and a great-grandfather in a third. We must not only please to take the apple, but we must please, *to please*, TO PLEASE to take the apple. But even for this great-grandfather, the necessitarians feel no becoming reverence; but proceed to inquire of this venerable personage, where he came from. They put the question without delicacy or reserve, what brought him there; and how he came to present himself within the field of their mental vision. It would be a strange answer, that he came

there uncaused ; and that, while all the rest look up to him as their ancestor, he may be allowed to pass without a reckoning. The sturdy combatants will not allow him to get by in this manner, but proceed to put him through the same process as the rest ; so that every single voluntary act would require an infinite series of causes.”

The reader of these logical demonstrations of a point, that touches moral responsibility in its source, cannot but feel unsatisfied with a result, which is arrived at without allusion to any moral principle of action, and does not come home in any way to our moral consciousness. He will, as Edwards’ editor observes, (p. 26), be “conscious of a vague dissatisfaction, or latent suspicion, that some fallacy has passed into the train of propositions, although the linking of syllogisms seems perfect.” It is surprising, that an accurate investigation was not made into the compatibility with the nature of the will itself, even though truly self-determining, of any repeated resolutions, the assumption of which, as necessary for self-determination, has been held to furnish an argument *ad absurdum*, to exclude the possibility of its having such a power. To this inquiry I shall now proceed ; and I hope to be able to establish, that the assumption referred to is quite unwarranted, and that Edwards’ demonstration is vitiated by the fallacy, of applying to an act of the moral will a kind of test, which is derived from what is peculiar to the logical under-

standing, and which is heterogeneous to the spiritual mode of existence and action, to which the moral will belongs. As an argument so abstruse as that presented by Edwards, can be met only in its own way, I must request the particular attention of the reader to the few pages to be devoted to its examination.

The intellectual conception of Cause and Effect requires the supposition, that the cause precedes the effect, and that the effect follows the cause. If the effect were along with, and, as it were, abreast of the cause, the understanding concludes, that it could not be produced by it; for how could an effect be produced by what had only a contemporaneous existence with itself? But this supposition, of precedence of the cause, and subsequence of the effect, in time, which is inseparable from the intellectual conception of them, has no existence in the truth of the case; as will appear from a simple deduction, which has the incidental advantage of shewing, that the reasoning, supposed by Edwards to reduce to an absurdity the self-determining power of the will, is itself reducible to an absurdity.

The reasoning of Edwards owes its force to the assumption, that Cause and Effect correspond to two divided and separable occurrences in their subjects, according to the notion of the precedence of the one to the other just noticed. In an act of will, these two things (assumed by Edwards to exist in it for the sake of argument), are,—the act of choice, and a prior act

of the will chusing this act. The argument is,—that these two things, held certainly to be found in a real case of Cause and Effect, will, on the supposition of a self-determining power in the will, involve inferences that end in an absurdity;—that hence no such separate things exist in an act of will;—that, therefore, there is no true act of cause and effect within the will itself, determining its own volition;—and, consequently, that the act of the will is simple, and, on this account, subject to passive action, on the occurrence of a cause out of itself adequate to move it.

Since, then, in this view, the cause must be separate from, and precede the effect, it follows, that the cause must be complete, and have ceased, before the effect can begin; consequently, no effect is possible, because it would take place without any cause present to produce it. And, if a renewed or continuous operation of the cause be supposed, still this must be complete and cease, before the effect can begin; and so on, *ad infinitum*. In this way, action by the will, sensation, all physical operations, nay, creation itself, may be *logically* proved to be impossible! Such is the necessary result of the principle of Edwards' reasoning, when carried forward into the region of external effects, which has been deemed so resistless, when applied backwards in the region of mental action.

Reflection on an instance of Cause and Effect, even among material things, may satisfy us, that the assumption implied in Edwards' argument is groundless.

A sword and a wound may be popularly termed cause and effect, and the necessary precedence of the former to the latter, in the act of inflicting the wound, would at first thought seem self-evident. But this is not the truth of the thing, taken strictly and philosophically. Cause and effect, in this sense, mean that *concurrence* of the subject, in which is the cause, with the subject in which is the effect, whence the effect arises co-instantaneously, from their joint operation. The effect, viewed separately in every conceivable part of it, must have actually present with it the cause to which each part owes its existence; otherwise it could not happen. It is this co-instantaneous concurrence, which exhibits a case of cause and effect. It follows, that there is no antecedence of cause to effect. The cause acts *with* and *in* the effect;—a mode of expression which contradicts the intellectual conception, and the verbal description of it, but which the spiritual form of consciousness recognises and believes, in its deeper apprehension of truth.

It is commonly said, in order to explain the discrepancy between conception and fact in such cases, that the conception of necessary precedence is in the order of nature, while the co-instantaneous existence of the things is in the order of time. But this way of speaking appears inconsistent with itself. That cannot be the order of nature, which is contradicted by the fact; and it is evidently inaccurate to ascribe to order in time, the co-existence which agrees with the fact.

What is termed the order of nature, truly means,—according to the mode of an intellectual conception,—and its peculiar character is succession in time; while the order of time, that is, of fact, means,—according to the subsistence of the things, when viewed spiritually and really.

Such illusions are unwarily adopted from the forms of conception proper to the understanding. Intellectual conceptions, as was observed in the Introduction, consist of the abstractions and generalizations of impressions, derived primarily from the material world without; consequently they possess the character of limitedness, separation and succession, which belong to their source. They are brought into the communion of man's nature in this form, which is a mode higher than mere sensation, in order that he may thus deal with them according to the light and insight of his higher being, the spirit, whereby he has the comprehensive intuition of the universal and absolutely real, and wherein is the presiding wisdom to bring all knowledge into unity and truth, in order that it may be used for its highest ends.

The character of language helps to turn aside our attention, from the higher forms of truth in the spirit, to the lower in the understanding. Language, in its direct and natural expression, contains signs of the intellectual, and not of the spiritual; in other words, it is constructed upon a logical, and not a spiritual basis. We speak of the cause *preceding* the effect, and *pro-*

ducing it; and of the effect *following*, or being *consequent* on, the cause;—words which literally express material antecedence and subsequence. There is no disadvantage from this, while the spiritual power is in vigorous exercise, for this uses intellectual conceptions, and words, their signs, as emblems, which it translates into its own mode of apprehension, and quickens with its own life. But when the spiritual has become languid, and men habitually subject themselves to the mere intellect, then the verbal forms for representing our thoughts deceive and enslave us. The relation of the spiritual to the intellectual, gives rise to the confusion in the attempt to apprehend and express clearly the point in dispute in this controversy, which was noticed in a former chapter.

Suppose, now, Cause and Effect, instead of being a *contemplation*, to be a *consciousness* in the self-reflective being of the will, which I assume to be able to be the cause of its own state; as, for instance, a man, by his will, may wickedly take himself, instead of God, to be the end of his action. I assume this, in order to try the argument of Edwards; as he assumed it, in order to disprove it. The consciousness, though embracing both cause and effect, will be simple and inseparable, because the will causing, acts *with* and *in* the will, as the subject of the cause, or the effect. The resolution,—“ I will live for myself,”—is evidently only one consciousness; while, to conceive this simple state intellectually, and to express

it in words, will require the supposition of two separate and successive things, an act and a state,—the resolving, and the thing resolved. Now, let there be added the supposition, (which, indeed, is involved in the assumption), that the man's will thus determines a state for itself, by a power which is self-originating, and for a motive within itself,—that is, that the will determines itself without any cause, except its own self-reflective act; the will, in this case, will still remain in a simple state of consciousness. There is nothing in the ascription of such a power to the will, which can give rise to a more complicated state of consciousness, than what has been already described; but rather the contrary. Yet the intellectual expression of the act by words, in this latter case, must involve the absurdity of the infinite chain of causes and effects, supposed by Edwards. But this is derived entirely from the necessary mode of conception by the understanding, which is not capable of mastering such an act at all; and does not correspond with the real state of the fact. in the condition of the spirit itself, which must be simple, equally whether the will has a self-determining power or not.

It appears, then, that the argument of Edwards is founded on the fallacy, of construing an act of the will or spirit, according to the manner of conception proper to the understanding. It amounts just to this,—Grant that there is no action, except according to the mode of conception by the understanding; and it

is demonstrable, that a process conceived according to the mode of operation of the spirit, is an absurdity.

That the will acts by a self-determining power, must be made out from other considerations. All I am entitled to conclude is, that Edwards' argument, for proving a self-determining power in the will to be self-contradictory and absurd,—which is the end for which he maintains it, and to which it is held valid by Dr Chalmers,—is a sophism. Before proceeding to the farther question, I shall state a corroborative argument, in refutation of that by which Edwards would exclude all such inquiry.

The denier of the possibility of freewill, as a sovereign, self-determining faculty, must be prepared to hold, that all things that exist were from eternity, either in themselves, or in their causes like to themselves; for, in the absence of the operation of freewill, the eternal existence of the things themselves, or of like causes, is inevitable. It follows, that a due consideration of the fact of creation ought to put an end to all questions as to the conceivableness—(for Edwards' principle comes to this,—that the idea is inconceivable both as to God and man)—of freedom of will, in the sense at issue in the controversy as to moral necessity. Creation is the external proof of the freedom of the Divine will in this sense. The eternal and unchangeable action of the Deity, in the absolute subsistence of the Godhead, ought doubtless to be regarded as essentially free; yet it can present to our

contemplation no external proof of freedom. But creation furnishes such evidence, because it originated by the Divine Word in time, without necessity in the being of God, and without the possibility of inducement or influence from without, from His own mere volition, originating within Himself, both a motive for creation, and creation itself. Thus, the supposed inconceivableness of freedom of will, by means of a self-determining power, is disproved by its unquestionable existence in an infinitely higher form, than that in which any creature can possess it.

The error of Edwards' reasoning, in applying an intellectual test to spiritual action, appears in a clear light, when we contemplate the attributes of the Divine Existence. There belongs to all of them a character, incomprehensible by the understanding, and contradictory to its mode of conception. This is not confined to revealed truths regarding God's Being, as some, bound in the chains of the fleshly understanding, would willingly suppose. The natural contemplation of God by our spirits, forces on us truths of the same character, and thus brings to us convincing proof of the existence of our spiritual being, apart from the mere understanding, whose objections it silences, and whose operations it remands to their own sphere. It is impossible, that we could receive such truths by faith, unless our spirits had a consciousness like unto them, adapted for being quickened by God's grace. But if such arguments as that of Edwards were ad-

missible, they would sweep away all this higher consciousness, and, with it, our knowledge of the attributes of God, of which it is the shadow, equally with belief in the freedom of the will.

It might be supposed, then, that the acknowledged attributes of the Deity,—His self-existence, self-origination of action and creation, and others—all of which are inconceivable by the understanding, should have led to the inference, that the will, the highest spiritual property of the creature made in the image of God, would partake of the inscrutable character of its original. But, instead of this, Edwards, and the other disputants against, as well as for, freedom, seem rather to have conceived of the character of the Divine action, according to the operation of the understanding. Hence, the admission on both sides, that the acts of God and of Christ are *necessarily* holy, just, and good; a mode of conception, well meant, but involving a grave error. It implies, that there exists a rule of perfect holiness, justice and goodness, to which the wills of God and of our Lord are subject as to a law, apart from their own most free and self-determined action; so that, could we only find access to it, there might be conceptions formed of what is holy, just and good, derived from what they *must* do, instead of the knowledge of this, taken from what they *have* done, and ever *will* do. It was natural to extend from this, *a fortiori*, a law for the will of man, apart from its own free action, embracing or rejecting

the truth; under the influence of which man's will must move in obedience to a sufficiently powerful motive, by the same rule, and with the same necessity, as effects follow causes in physics.

The character of inconceivableness, which we attach to self-origination of moral action, arises from the inveterate habit of regarding truths according to the laws of the logical faculty, or the understanding. When we think in this form, every step onward requires a proof, by the perception of a passive relation, separate from the point at which the mind stands. The conclusions of the mere understanding are as void of faith, as the consciousness of the senses. It is because the spirit is life, that it is light; and hence it proceeds by its own internal action, which action is inscrutable in regard to origin. If a reason could be given for its action, other than its will to act, the action would not be that of a spiritual being. This does not mean, that there is no reason, good or bad, in the action. There necessarily must be; but the reason, and its quality of being good or bad, must be deduced from the action, not the action, and its moral quality, from the reason. The specialty of the action of a spiritual being is, that the moral character of its action is found in the will itself, and not in any ground necessarily moving it. It does not follow from this, that the act is uncaused, in the sense of being purely contingent and without ground, as Edwards and Chalmers unaccountably assume to be the only

alternative to necessary sequence. The act is done by the self-originating power of the spiritual agent, for the end he chuses as good, and is an exercise of his peculiar form of being, on his responsibility. Necessarians fail to observe this, from confining their attention to the act, as between the man and the outward thing; and from not rather looking inwards, to the act as seen in the man's moral relation to God, which is its substance.

The existence of this form of being cannot, properly speaking, be proved, any more than the operations of the senses: it can only be felt and asserted. We know we see only by seeing; and, in like manner, we can know and feel conviction of our spiritual consciousness and mode of action, only by use and self-reflection.

There is a presumption, that the action of man's spiritual being is self-originating, in the fact that this is the mode of the spiritual action of the Fountain and Father of Spirits. We seem warranted to conclude, that the same is the mode of spiritual action essentially, and, in particular, of the spiritual action of man, whom the Scriptures declare to have been made "in the image of God." Many other things probably enter into the character so attributed to man; but it cannot but be supposed, that the essential form of spiritual action must form the basis. Of course, a spiritual creature's power of self-origination will have the necessary limits of a creature's place,—that is, the power of self-origination of a motive of action, on the

contemplation of itself and of its relation to God, as was explained in the last chapter.

Our consciousness suggests no other mode of action of the will, than that it is self-originating. It was shown in the second chapter, that a temptation is not the cause of sin, but the occasion of the question being raised in the conscience, whether the man will be faithful or unfaithful to God. The man has within him the sense of duty to God, and he experiences the temptation to set it aside, for an end terminating in himself; and he has power to do either, as he pleases. If this is not the power of self-origination, our nature has been cunningly framed, so as to make us believe that it is. But since it is the work of the God of truth, our consciousness should be taken as conclusive, unless met by what is inconceivable in such circumstances,—a demonstration of the impossibility of self-determination, as a mode of creature existence.

It is the conviction, that an act of sin is self-originated, that gives its sting to the conscience. The man's consciousness denies, that the act was necessitated from without, under the power of the law of cause and effect; for he will confess, that duty to God was in itself to his reason the higher motive, but that he overruled it, in order to please himself. He condemns himself for his act, unless the blinding power of self-gratification has for the time destroyed the natural feelings. His having *chosen* the evil, he

accounts his sin. Thus, the verdict of conscience disowns the law of cause and effect; for, if a man could bring himself to believe, that the constitution of his nature, the temptation, and his yielding to it, were links of an iron chain of causation, his reason would demand, that he should regard his sense of responsibility as delusive, and his remorse, nature's confession of guiltiness, as misplaced. Though, by a happy inconsistency, it was far otherwise with Edwards and Chalmers exactly, this reasoning is in vogue among the open deniers of God, and of the reality of moral obligation.

Both these authors maintain, that the sense of moral good and evil arises in the mind, independently of the question of necessity; and they make confident appeals to the common feelings of men, in support of the assertion. If this be so, then the moral feeling must be a mere instinct, acting without and in spite of reason. Yet men take pains to obtain information as to the circumstances of an action, bearing upon the state of the actor's mind, which instinct would entirely dispense with. But the position truly begs the question; for men's feelings arise in our nature, as it really exists; and, therefore, its constitution must first be determined, in order to show in what state of things men's feelings appear. A plain man, such as a peasant, to whom Dr Chalmers appeals, might, however, form a decided opinion on the question, after the difference was made intelligible to him, between a necessity

against the will, and *in* the will. When he understood the assertions,—that he was not to regard the moral quality of his actions as self-originated, but as the necessary result of a succession of arranged causes and effects, the first part of the series being out of himself altogether; that every thing he had done, or was to do, was contrived to happen beforehand, by means of this necessary succession; that his feelings of liking and disliking, of chusing and refusing, and the actions founded on them, were but the exterior form of the concealed mechanism beneath; and that, nevertheless, it was his duty to regard it as quite just and natural, that the consequences of all the acts so performed should be borne by him, as a moral, reasonable, and accountable creature;—it seems probable, that he would dismiss the representation as inapplicable to human nature, and reject the thought, that any such deceit could come from the hand of God. Yet, in what respect is the system under consideration distinguishable from this?

The doctrine of moral necessity brings an insuperable difficulty upon the fall of man, and the origin of evil. It represents man as placed in a series of connected sequences, set in motion by God, and ending in the fall. Edwards answers the conclusion pressed on him, that his theory makes God the author of sin, by what Dr Chalmers, in the second lecture, calls, “a very happy distinction,”—that “the vice of a vicious act of will lies in the *nature* of the act, and not in its *cause*.” But

this answer suggests these two preliminary questions : 1. Can there be vice in an act of will, that has a *cause*, in the necessitating sense of the term ; in other words, can a creature commit sin, by yielding to the *necessary* operation of its nature ? and, 2. The nature of an act in a necessary agent, must mean the nature of the agent. If then, man, by his nature, necessarily did a vicious act, how can it be true, that he was made “ very good ? ”

In regard to the difficulty suggested by the second of these questions, it will be observed, that when man's acts of will are regarded as necessary, the character of goodness ascribed to him in his creation, does not hold the same relation to the act of creation on God's part, as it does when he is regarded as possessed of freewill. The stability of man's will then becomes a question of mere creative power ; for, I suppose, it will not be disputed, that God may form the links of causative sequence as strong as he pleases, and that only His will, and nothing in the thing created, can place a limit to the result. In this view, it is difficult to understand, that any thing less than such a strength of will, as would have enabled man to resist every possible temptation, would correspond with the condition of being “ very good,” which he received from his Creator.

It is not surprising, that Dr Chalmers should have found it impossible to reconcile the doctrine of moral necessity with the moral nature of God. As I have

founded on this impossibility, as furnishing an argument against moral necessity, it will be right to show, that no such difficulty attends the supposition of man being formed with freewill.

The honour of God, and the manifestation of His glory, is the first end of creation, and the blessedness and perfection of the creatures is the second; while both of these will in the result perfectly harmonize. Since God saw it to be good, that there should be a creation, rather than not, it appears to follow, that a creation suitable to His greatness and excellency, will provide for its having a head formed like Himself, through whom, along with the subordinated parts, His glory will be declared. The form of being with which man has been endowed, is not one curtailed and constrained into arbitrary action, to be kept, as it were, by the external interposition of the divine power. It is a nature of conscious, self-reflective and self-originating activity, in the knowledge of moral truth, and with moral freedom, after the image of the freedom of God himself; and to be established for ever in the use of that freedom. Creatures so formed must be perfected on a moral basis in themselves, by the operation of God's grace internally, as the indispensable recipient of His grace externally. They must be instructed in the essential moral truths, which are inherent in the divine character, and in those implanted in their own; and they must be made fully alive, not theoretically, but experimentally, to the operation of

those truths, in producing the extremest degrees, and the never-ending consequences, of blessedness or misery. All this is necessary for the foundation, and the unfailing stability, of a moral universe, having so lofty a character as that which has been created. Without this, there would remain weakness and uncertainty, through something unproved and unknown, in regard to the being of the Creator, or in the being of the creature, which would cause present distrust, and might cause future failure. Hence, the distinguished place designed for man, made necessary a trial commensurate with it.

The righteousness of exposing man to the fullest proof of what is in him, and to the development of all the consequences of the use of his powers, I submit to be clearly dependent on his being formed with the fullest and most independent freedom for spiritual action. To form creatures with an element of necessity in their physical constitution, certain to bring them to destruction, through a fixed series of events with which they are brought into connection, would be to form them in unrighteousness. But to form them with perfect and independent freewill, with a suitable nature for its exercise, and a due knowledge of their duty and responsibility, and then to try them, at the risk, and even, in God's knowledge, the certainty, that such creatures will fall, has in it no element of unrighteousness. In the former case, the whole constitution of things being one of fixed se-

quences, the fall would occur through the direct contrivance of God, and might have been hindered by the interposition of *mere power*. But, in the latter case, the fall would be contrary to God's command and earnest desire, as well as to the right operation of the powers bestowed on the creature; and interposition to prevent it would be impossible. A helping hand would be inconsistent with the very nature and integrity of the being requiring it, for this would overthrow the freewill, which was the perfection of his constitution. Would God therefore not send help? The event has answered this question. But to allege the unrighteousness of forming such a creature, and trying him, even though he should fall, would infer the preference of the creature before the Creator, or of the means before the end, and the affirmance of the presumptuous principles,—that it would be unrighteous in the Creator to form creatures, except upon the condition of hindering the development in them of all creature ways, that would prove injurious to themselves;—and that the attainment of ends, the most lofty and glorious, both for the revelation of God's character, and for the ultimate blessedness, perfection, and stability of creation itself, is not lawful through the proof of the moral unfaithfulness of the creatures, and their consequent corruption, under a righteous trial according to their nature.

It is evident that no additional strength in the mere creature will itself, could sustain the creature through his trial, and prevent the evil; for freewill cannot be

made more free, and would not be more stable if it could. Nothing of the character of creation endowment can remove the mutability, which belongs—not by the infusion into it of mutability, but through inherent inferiority,—to the will of a creature, and confers on it the immutability of God. Mutable it must still remain, though in the utmost perfection of the standing of a creature. The effective help, therefore, that came from God in regard to the actual case, and by which He brought good, the highest good, out of evil, was by means of redemption after a fall; which has established all things upon the basis, 1st, Of the proved mutability and weakness of the mere creature will in itself, whence creatures learn a lesson of self-distrust and humility never to be forgotten; 2d, Of their being taught that their strength and stability are only in God, and the fatal consequences of departure from Him; and, 3d, That the new creation by grace, stands in the Eternal Son, as the Christ, who alone, through perfect obedience and faithfulness even unto death, could make a sufficient and acceptable offering for redemption; and that God will be thus enabled to reveal His own excellences and glory, and to provide for the perfection and blessedness of the creatures, by bringing the creation out of a new nothingness, even more perfect than the first,—that of self-renunciation and death, on account of the passing away of the old things because of sin,—into a condition, in the risen Christ, far more glorious than

that of the original creation, and with a stability impossible to be shaken. What is essential to render the scheme of redemption free from every shade of unrighteousness, and to make it the perfection of wisdom, truth, and love, is the true moral freedom, or power of self-determination of the will, of the creature proved and redeemed. These results could not have been accomplished, either by the creation of beings ordained to a contrived mode of necessary action, or by the preservation of creatures, having true freewill, in an unreal stability and perfection, by bolstering them round with shifts and expedients, so as to disguise their creature weakness ; for these would have been plans void of truth and genuineness, and unworthy of God.

Man must be satisfied to leave in God's hands the development of the principles of His wise and righteous ways, content with knowing, that every one who obeys the first law of his nature,—that of yielding himself to the will of his Creator,—is in safety ; while none else is, or can be. We ought not to doubt, that there is great mercy, as well as wisdom, in the perfect exhibition of the creature's vanity, at the first unfolding of creation, in which we now are ; although, whilst standing amongst the mud and rubbish of the opening foundations of the everlasting Temple, we may be tempted in our folly to question both.

In this question, then, every thing connected with the right understanding of man's righteous trial, and

eternal condition, whether for evil or good, turns upon the will being self-determined. No interposition, or cunning excitement and succession of feelings and convictions of mind and heart, however complicated and delicate, will conceal the fundamental mechanism of man's moral actions, if there is wanting a moral option of this character. Take away from man this option,—that is, the internal power, in the sense expressed, of appreciating, selecting and realizing, a moral end of action,—and his action will be subject to a necessity like that of the actions of the brutes, differing from them only in being decorated with sentiment. The motive of most power will cause the action, by the force of what is akin to a physical law, and hesitation can result only from the conflicts of opposite attractions of advantage and disadvantage, or of pleasure and pain, without the possibility of the feeling of conscience, and the sense of responsibility. Man will pass through the events of life, surrounded by objects, provided from an independent source; possessed of faculties, the slaves of external excitants; and amidst circumstances, which he cannot control or modify, except as a passive agent: he will be a living machine. Such must man be void of freewill, unless the intelligence of reason shall be denied; and then he will become the creature of unreflecting instinct, possessing only the shadow of true human qualities. Instead of these give man true freedom of will, with reason and conscience, and the other attributes of his

real nature ; and straightway in the sphere of his spirit, out of the reach of control or necessitating influence from external existences, there arises a power, the exercise of which is between himself and God, and by means of which, when exercised in uprightness, all external beings and events, though they may cause him to suffer, cannot cause him to sin.

It is not inconsistent with freedom of will, in the sense contended for, that a man who sins does become subject to the power of a motive ; nor does this establish the conclusion of Edwards. It is a corollary from the very definition of sin, that a man thereby allows a lower end than the will of God, the highest, to sway him : his will, by which, in his freedom, he should have refused, has brought itself and the man into captivity to a creature, and keeps him in it ; *it* is the actor in the delinquency, as well as the perpetuator of it ; and therefore he is guilty ; Rom. vi. 16. It is from the prevalence of this condition, and from men living contentedly in it, that they are found with their wills very much under the bondage of influences self-imposed, for which Edwards contends as their necessary condition, for good, as well as evil.

What shall we say, then, of the effect on the freedom of the will, of subjection to the will of God ? Can it be shewn to be true, that “ His service is perfect freedom ? ”

CHAPTER V.

RECONCILIATION OF FREEWILL WITH THE SUSTAINING
AND OVERRULING POWER OF GOD.

IN turning to this view of the subject, we must never cease to remember, that the place and the operation of the Creator are altogether beyond the comprehension and judgment of the creature. It is only as a bare fact, without grounds or causes beyond the fact, that we know God to have been the Originator, and to be the Upholder, of all things,—that “in Him we live, and move, and have our being.” In other words, we know this only by faith. And because of this, we are to exercise towards Him trust, fear, obedience, gratitude, admiration, and worship. Deeper knowledge is debarred from us, not merely through a reverent abstinence, on our part, from a forbidden region, but by the impossibility of our attaining it. The sort of absurdity, involved in our attempting to judge concerning the fundamental ground of creation in God, and of its continual support by His hand, would be similar to that of our attempting to discuss,

a priori, the necessity, the fitness, or the change, of the primary qualities of material and spiritual existence, as we experience them in our being; but the degree of absurdity would be even much greater, inasmuch as our vain thoughts would essay to carry themselves above the mere works of creation, to the operation of the unsearchable counsel of their Living Source; Psalm cxxxix. 6. If we but consider, we shall find ourselves repelled from this, to us a region of utter darkness, by the absence of all principles, and even ideas, to conduct us into it. This is the unapproachable sphere of Deity, of His actings in which God gives no account to his creatures, nor can He suffer them to ask any. This sphere must remain as inscrutable to us in the state of perfection, as it is at present, and it will then be as clear to us as the sun, that the thought of looking into it would be equally sinful and foolish.

When we thus contemplate the Creator in His own essential place, we have the knowledge of Him, not as a power on our level, not as exciting or controlling creature faculties, in their responsible exercise by the creature, but as the fundamental Originator, Sustainer and Disposer of all being, material and spiritual, according to its several kinds. He does not come into collision, so to speak, with any of the resolutions or acts of His intelligent creatures, in the sphere of their spiritual liberty. He does not hinder our reasonings, or resist our plans, or control our

aims, or in any way interfere with the exercise of our wills, as a power meeting and using coercion towards these outgoings of our inner being. The liberty we claim is true, in that region of our being, to which we look, when we think of God's power over us, and of our being liable to His judgment. So truly are we free, that our powers were given to be, as it were, the revelation and exhibition, in the sphere of creation, of the powers of God Himself; for man was made in His image. Had Adam remained upright, the natural man would have been in God's stead upon earth, so far as freedom and power are concerned for external action, in the whole range of creation subjected to him. And, when we do evil, it is not God who first condemns us, but our own consciences, the testimony of our own being, the integrity of whose powers we have abused; 1 John iii. 20. This is our condition, that, having the powers of God, the reality of His image, the possession of His freedom, we find the reward of evil-doing first in our own nature; and, as Adam hid himself, and thus declared his guilt, so our hearts condemn us, and we shrink from God, in anticipation of His righteous judgment, which is above all, and which will be made manifest in His due time.

It is because of God thus encircling and comprehending our whole being, so as to confer on it such largeness of action,—of His being sustaining and transcending ours, in all those directions alike, in

which we can claim liberty, or can imagine restraint, —that his service is perfect freedom. It is vain for us to think, that power to rest in our own wills and ends, independently of Him, would make us free. As we are but weak creatures, this cannot but prove a false centre, a very prison-house. We read in Romans i. the necessary development of so great an error. To enjoy perfect freedom, we must obey the Creator, whose power and goodness will give us the full range of enjoyment for those faculties, which He conferred, in order to satisfy according to their true character. A creature possessing a rational and moral nature, including freewill, can rise up to the full stature of his being, only by holding it in subjection to Him, who alone is an object adequate to and surpassing its capacity, and who has created all things and all faculties, only as means for shadowing forth the infinite excellences of His own being. Far rather say, that the flight of an eagle, in its majestic circles, is not free, because dependent on the air for buoyancy and progression, than that such a creature is not free, because of its dependence on the all-sustaining power of God. Liberty, on other terms, is but the self-contradictory and self-destructive desire, of being equal with Him, and irresponsible; and a secret wish for this is truly at the bottom of our reluctance to acknowledge ourselves subject to His will.

But how, then, it will be asked, can true liberty on our part be compatible with the acknowledgment of

the supremacy and the sustaining power of the Creator, in the absolute sense just expressed, to which reason, our consciences, and the Scriptures agree, and which implies, that we are dependent on Him for our hopes, for the means of attaining them, and for every thing belonging to our lot and destiny? We must be careful not to prejudice the consideration of this question, by treating it according to the manner of conception proper to the understanding. We can learn our relation to God, only by the consciousness of the spirit, in the exercise of faith. As His being is essentially above ours, we cannot see the reconciliation of our perfect liberty with our perfect dependence on Him in its exercise, by way, properly speaking, of comprehending it, that is, of looking into it, as a truth beneath us, or on our level. If we could, it would be a truth for the understanding. It is a spiritual conviction, a ray of light from the "true light that lighteth every man," and of its own nature a mystery, as all spiritual apprehension truly is, because resting on its own internal evidence without reasons; and, much more, have all truths, which relate to the connection of the creature's being with the sustaining power of the Creator, the character of mysteries. The light we may look for in this case, therefore, can come to us only in these two ways:—By our being satisfied, 1. negatively, that the truth in question does not contradict our reason, the spiritual faculty for discerning truth, and, 2. positively, that our place as creatures,

and all our duties and convictions, harmonize with and necessarily suppose it.

1. The first point is easily disposed of, for it truly involves the question, whether a creation separate from the Creator is possible? There being such a creation, it follows that all the powers of the creatures, sentient, intellectual, moral and spiritual, exist, and are capable of exercise in perfection, according to their several natures, though every moment upheld, as well as originally created, by God; Psalm cxxxix. 1-18. While, in a transcendent, sense, incomprehensible by us, God appoints, upholds, enables and fulfils, every act of every creature, He does not thereby, in any degree, mix His own being with that of the creature, and the acts are, nevertheless, the true and proper acts of the creatures themselves. We know, by faith, that God is the universal Sustainer; we know, in fact, by consciousness and experience, that the creatures' acts are their own. This is the truth of creation; having, on the one side of it, the falsehood, that there is no God; and, on the other, the falsehood, that creation is an emanation from God. To say, that this is incomprehensible, and a mystery, is only to acknowledge, that we are creatures, and that there is a God. It follows, that God's perfect knowledge, nay, His providential appointment, of every thing dependent on the free volitions of men, occasions no greater difficulty as to their real existence in men, than occurs

in regard to the reality of any other form or act of creature being.

These considerations afford an answer to the difficulty, that seems to have pressed both on Edwards and Chalmers,—that to ascribe a self-determining power to man's will, would be the same as to emancipate him from subjection to the Divine will. They must have overlooked the incomprehensibility of the Divine existence, when they maintained the scheme of moral necessity, or the course of necessary succession in moral action by cause and effect, as being requisite to afford to our minds an intelligible explanation of God's certain control over us. The same error is common in the treatises on the subject; and it will appear from the next chapter, to enter deeply into the Absolute Decrees of the Calvinistic system. But, on the contrary, I submit that nothing can be more sure, than that any reason we may try to imagine, in order to account for God's effective control over His works, and to render it intelligible, needs nothing else to prove, that it is not a true reason. We must be content assuredly to believe, on the one hand, that all the acts, as well as the condition and destiny, of His creatures, are under the absolute control of God; and yet, on the other, that the knowledge how this comes to pass, is perfectly inscrutable by our faculties;—as will appear under the second head.

2. The second point is, that our place as creatures, and all our duties and convictions, harmonize with, and

necessarily suppose, the perfect agreement of true freedom of will with God's supremacy and sustaining power. This conclusion admits of various illustrations.

(1.) It is the true, and the only legitimate exercise of this liberty, to acknowledge by it, that we owe our being to God, and depend on him continually for all its powers. We acknowledge this, because our conviction of its truth constrains us to do so. The law of the will's righteousness, therefore, itself requires us to believe, that God sustains us; whence it follows, that He must know all our ways.

(2.) Our abuse of the freedom of the will, to deny God, and His preservation of us, is wickedness, which, if perfected, will ruin us. This is the result, because we have embraced a falsehood, which, instead of emancipating us from dependence on God for all things, renders us subject to judgment, because it is a falsehood. Our condemnation will be, that we have not used our freedom of will, to acknowledge all things to be from God, and to trust in Him accordingly.

(3.) It is the plain dictate of reason, that no creature can be placed in a condition of independence, in regard to the Creator. The contrary supposition is inconsistent with first principles, and inconceivable. It would be irrational to believe, that the creature's liberty can be exercised, except through the upholding power of the Creator.

(4.) It is a paradox only to the intellect, and not at all to the spiritual convictions, and the moral feelings, that the conditions of man's rectitude and happiness should be these,—1. That he is spiritually free, 2. That he is responsible, 3. That every thing pertaining to his being and destiny is in God's hands, and, 4. That he lives in the spirit of these truths. It would, on the other hand, contradict our spiritual convictions and moral feelings, that any of these conditions should be wanting. While the spiritual and moral consciousness appears unchangeable, there is good reason for expecting, that the intellectual paradox should exist, and be incapable of solution intellectually; for,

(5.) It is inseparable from a creature's place, that the ultimate grounds of his being are unknown to him, except subjectively, in his conscious existence, and that he must leave these in God's hands; and hence the exercise of faith, on the part of the creature towards the Creator, as to all that pertains to its dependence on him, is the final ground of its union with Him. The impassable limit between the place of the Creator and that of the creature, occurs at this point. The spiritual faculty of faith only, therefore, can reconcile man's freedom of will with his absolute dependence on God. It is impossible to reconcile them by any process of the understanding, because the understanding takes cognizance only of relations and conclusions, connected with premises, whose powers are fully known to itself, and are on its own level.

But the reconciliation by means of faith is perfect, for faith declares, nay demands and rests upon, God's ultimate and absolute power in the condition and destiny of all his works.

(6.) It is of essential importance to the stability of our religious character, as well as to our spiritual comfort, that we settle firmly with ourselves, that the true and only reconciliation of the freedom of our will with dependence on God, is by faith, that is, reliance on and obedience to Him. "The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom," is not a mere truism, as we are apt to consider it, but a profound principle. The conclusion before mentioned is, in fact, habitually admitted and applied by us in substance, for it lies at the root of all judgment between right and wrong, and, consequently, of all responsibility, all right to make and enforce laws, and all estimate of the actions and principles of men. But, in the personal question of our own responsibility to God, we are often tempted to a reluctance to acknowledge Him to be over us, and to a desire to hold ourselves on a level with Him, or at least to be left to ourselves, and to have nothing to do with Him.

(7.) It will be observed, that the solution by faith of the difficulty arising from the all-pervading power of the divine will, merely reconciles our minds, considered as powers, having a separate consciousness, and, as it were, an antagonistic position in relation to that will, to submission, by absolute acquiescence

from faith and duty. It does not, as the explanation has itself implied, give us any information as to the divine action in that region; looking to which, "the spirit prayeth," because it reposes on its Creator with filial confidence, "but the understanding" continues altogether "unfruitful." An obedient will enjoys truth and peace, because it agrees morally with the Creator's pre-eminent will, acknowledging with sincerity the absolute pre-eminence, and choosing what it chooses, and refusing what it refuses. On the other hand, a disobedient will is in falsehood and uneasiness, because it is at moral variance with the pre-eminent will. These are moral states of men's minds, in reference to their use of freewill, as responsible beings. The deeper question has been purposely left untouched in these illustrations,—what is the cause of men's minds being found in these respective states, in the point of view, which carries us out of the creature's region, into that in which the Supreme Being is the ultimate appointer of every event and destiny for his own glory? I forbear entering into this topic at present, because, besides a partial notice of the subject of it towards the close of this chapter, it will be necessary to resume it with some minuteness in the next, in connection with the Calvinistic views of the doctrines of Predestination and Election; which do not indeed ask the question, but which, it appears to me, have rashly taken it for granted, that the ques-

tion has actually received a decisive answer, for the use of the Church.

Thus, both reason and faith require and suppose, that freewill exists in subjection to the overruling and sustaining power of God. There remain two points, for farther elucidation.

1. The existence of sin in a creation sustained by God, is a matter as to which the mind cannot rest contented, while any obscurity remains upon it. The difficulty arises, in part, from want of a clear discrimination between emanation and creation. A conception according to the intellect can carry us no farther than the notion of emanation, for it supposes causes to produce effects like themselves, and on their own level. It is an intuitive spiritual act for us to have the conviction of, at once, our diversity from, and our complete dependence upon God. The first branch of this conviction shows the possibility of sin, so far as the creature is concerned. The difficulty, in connection with the second branch, to account for sin finding an entrance into a creation dependent on God, arises from the sustaining power of God being imagined in direct connection with the acts of sin. But this is an inaccurate way of viewing His relation to the creation. He made, and He sustains men, as substantive beings; and the acts done by individual men in their separate places, result from His continued sustenance of them and their powers in the totality of

of their being in those places, wherein they are tried as men, and consequently develope the works of men. We may say reverently, that God is chargeable, only with the wisdom of the constitution, which he has given to men, with the perfection of the ends which he will develope in them and by them, and with the means by which He will evolve those ends. But what emerges in men, between their first endowment and the bringing out of the end, has been shown to belong properly to men themselves, provided they have been constituted with freewill; and to charge this on God, would be equivalent to a denial of the reality of creaturehood in man, in the possession of the lofty place, subject to righteous trial, in which it exists.

2. We have seen, that the systems of necessity and of freewill alike ascribe to God, absolutely, the origination and ordering of all things. The former accounts for this by means of an infrangible chain of cause and effect, commencing from God's own hand; the latter claims it as an indispensable part of its own consciousness, as the demand of reason, and as the sole ground of trust and hope. It will be right to examine the difference between these systems, as bearing on the place they both attribute to God.

It is not easy to consider this as to the former system, because the actual condition of men appears to be quite different from what would be possible, were the system true. I think it follows from views

already expressed, that, under a system of moral necessity, man must either have been a creature of reason without conscience, or of instinct without reason. He is neither ; and the only other supposition which can be made, and which is substantially, though on their part neither professedly nor intentionally, to be deduced from the views of Edwards and Chalmers, is one altogether inadmissible, — that, though subject to necessity, man is under the deceitful feeling of freewill, so as to cause him to act with the belief of the reality of conscience, which otherwise his reason might repudiate. Were this true, I think Edwards has shown good grounds for concluding, that the course of prudence would be for men to act as if every thing was real, and to make the most of the system given us, fictitious though it was ; and that the argument of those who contended, that care, and precautions, and the adjustment of means to ends, would be vain under such a system, is not well founded. But we cannot take a system of life, held to come from the God of truth, on the foundation of a palliation like this. The deceit at bottom is fatal to it.

I add the following remarks, as to the character of any system, whose principle is necessity :

1. It is not easy to see, what lessons for illustrating God's character, and the condition and ways of creatures, could be drawn from it. It must be all a piece of frost-work. There cannot be life or growth in it. It will hang together according to the laws

imprinted on its physical constitution; but it might have had any other form, in which it would have cohered just as firmly. Its subjects can have no rational and intelligent consciousness of its truth. According to the utmost perfection of the idea in it, it may give an accurate representation of what would have taken place, had the actors been endued with the freedom of moral agents. The highest virtue conceivable under it is a selfish prudence; unless the agents shall be deceived into the appearance of more generous sentiments.

2. Such a system places God's Incomprehensibility on the same footing as that of physical causes, which all, in an inadequate sense, are incomprehensible, and ascribes to Him merely the distinction of the "*Great First Cause.*" He is reached in all directions, as seen from the creature's place, only through the law of cause and effect. But the Incomprehensibility of God differs infinitely in kind, as well as degree, from the unapparency of the unknown ground of creature causes. God sustains all his creatures *within* His infinite being, and not by projecting them out from it. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." While we are sustained and supported by him at all points, yet He touches us not with his being: our place is substantive for its creature end. At the same time, we are so united to God in spirit, that through that relation we are drawn onward to all truth, and consequently to all freedom; for truth in Him is in-

finite, and freedom is but the faculty of expatiating in it, without restraint, on the one hand, and without disorder and confusion, on the other. In Him are all wisdom and order, all subordination of means to ends, all power of perfecting the parts in themselves, yet adapting them to their places in the whole. The will of man, then, when following God's ways in righteous obedience, as he is led spiritually to discern them unfolded in the course of His dispensations, will find its happiness, its freedom, and the fulfilment of the largest compass of its desires and comprehension, all satisfied by falling in with the will of God. This mysterious relation to God is surely something very different from that of subjection to causes, and supposes an active power within us, a living faith, through which it may be apprehended, the very opposite of the form of conception attached to cause and effect. And,

3. As the system accounts for sin by a constitutional necessity in the sinner by original creation, it saps the foundation of all true faith towards God, with which such a thought is incompatible.

I proceed now to point out the difference from what has been stated, of the relation of men, regarded as morally free, to the absolute supremacy of God to order their condition.

The important consideration is, that faith,—which is the only righteous condition of our spirits towards God, our own consciences being witness, which con-

sequently is the principle of our union with Him, and which, at the same time, is the only righteous mode of exercising freewill,—requires the admission, that every thing that concerns ourselves and the whole world, be left unreservedly in God's hands. It would be a contradiction to our whole moral and rational being, to believe it right for any one to deny this; and the will acting on the denial we would at once pronounce in a sinful state, because taking a place, which denies the place of God, and usurps that place for itself. And we know, that if we and all others were heartily conceding this first principle, and acting accordingly,—that is, owning God's rule, and living according to His laws, all would be well with us and them. It would be an evident contradiction for any one, when he either refused to submit himself to God, according to the first law binding a creature, or when he, though professing to submit, nullified the profession by rejecting His laws, to complain of being liable to judgment.

It is not apart from the argument to notice, that we are subject to a subtle deception, as to this point of faith. We allow the thought to enter our minds, that we would submit to God, provided we were satisfied, that we should be saved by so doing. This state of mind, which is very common, keeping many in the condition of "almost Christian," to the great peril of their souls, involves a vital mistake as to man's relation to his Creator, and as to the nature of true faith

There can be no such bargaining with God, on the part of the sinner. He puts himself on a level with Him by so doing. This state of mind has in it that independence, which is the root and essence of sin. The right state of mind of man towards his Creator, is that of his casting himself on His mercy at all hazards, and making no terms, satisfied that it will be well, if God's will be done. It is only thus, that we act towards God, as our relation to Him as creatures demands, and as His place and character, and the testimony of His grace in Christ, warrant and invite; and thus only shall we find access opened to us to forgiveness and salvation. The reasonableness of these conclusions in the sight of the conscience, illustrates forcibly, how imperatively our deepest convictions require absolute submission to the Creator.

As the essential condition of uprightness is faith towards God, that is, unreserved obedience of heart and will to Him; so, that of wickedness is disobedience. We cannot consider the case of a wicked man, nor can such a one consider his own case, except in this light. He is self-condemned in the light of his own reason and conscience. He has placed the lower part of his being in contradiction to the higher. He has preferred himself, or something equally worthless, chosen by himself, before God, "worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator." Judgment against a man in this condition of spirit, is but the confirmation of what his own mind has recorded

against him. Hence, we see how it is, that actions of unrighteousness, proceeding from a will opposed to that of God, can establish nothing contrary to His purpose. The ground of such acts is simply falsehood ; for this is the character of an act of will, whereby a creature makes itself the end of action. Falsehood can found nothing. Anything that may seem to be built upon it, must be a mere deception. Just, then, as even diseases have their laws, so, when a man sets himself to establish his own ends in the world, whatever apparent, and whatever real, consequences proceed from his will of sin, can have no ground of stability in such a cause, but must fall under the order of God's directing hand, to bring such lessons out of them, as His wisdom and truth shall judge fit. And, on the other hand, since the righteous actions of men proceed from righteous acts of will, to cast themselves on God by faith, for guidance and strength to understand and do what is right, we hence see the solid ground of the prayer of the righteous, that the works of their hands may be established ; Psalm xc. 16, 17.

Thus, the supposition of freewill answers every condition of righteousness in the constitution of man, for giving him a clear rule and obligation of duty, and for vindicating God's ways in regard to him. When freewill is righteously exercised, God's will to bless harmonizes with its act ; when unrighteously, His will to condemn harmonizes with its self-condemnation. It is impossible to imagine a more perfect reconcilia-

tion of righteousness with reason and truth, in the conviction of the whole of our rational and moral faculties.

The consummating view of the truth, on which these conclusions depend,—that the final and absolute appointment of the destiny of all and every man is in God's hands, according to the eternal counsel of His will,—forms, when duly considered, the safeguard of all that has been said, and can work evil, only by an abuse of its true bearing, on the one hand, or on the other.

The absolute sovereignty ascribed to God will not justify its being maintained, that the rejection of the system of necessity for that of freewill, only shifts the difficulty a step back, or from a necessity in the working of man's powers, to a necessity by the unseen operation of God's will. This can be said, only when the constitution of things is alleged to stand on the footing of necessity, through means of the law of cause and effect, in which case it would make no difference at what part of the chain the difficulty is placed, and in fact every link would suggest the same difficulty. But freewill clears man's nature and consciousness of the whole of the difficulty. Every principle of our being proclaims the reasonableness and the truth of our trial, and of its results, and is self-contradicted, when they are questioned. On the footing of freewill, we have not a moral feeling, by which we can be conscious of any other conviction, than that of righteousness, in the reward of uprightness, and in the

punishment of wickedness, or any faculty, by which we could make an objection to this result intelligible.

And this being the case, all difficulty whatever disappears, and none remains to account for. For it is the sum of what has been said regarding the import of faith towards God, as being the first duty incumbent on us, according to the dictate of all our rational and moral powers, that we repose implicit reliance on the appointments of God's will, in His ultimate disposal of all things, and hold them the arrangements of absolute truth and righteousness. To speak of difficulties in this region, then, would be equally blasphemy and nonsense: if done seriously, it would infer a species of Atheism. If it could be shown, that God's absolute acts affect the reality or the freedom of our powers, then a difficulty would arise, but only because it emerged in the region of the creature. The evil in the system of necessity is, not that it represents men's destinies as fixed in the counsels of God, but as fixed in the natural constitution of the creatures themselves. There ought to be no difference between the disputants as to God's sovereign place; and, if any of the defenders of freewill have maintained positions at variance with it, (and I believe some have,) they have greatly erred, and have not understood the true principles of the question. Far from the maintainers of freewill having occasion to call this in question, it has been shown, that freewill itself rests on it. For either class, therefore, to regard

what belongs to God's place, otherwise than with implicit submission, and hence as raising no difficulty whatever, would contradict their own principles.

In the spirit of reverent contemplation, and without any approach to presumptuous judgment, we may apprehend, that there are questions of the profoundest interest and importance involved in the first principles of a creation. Its being worthy of God,—the freedom or the necessity of the creatures' powers,—the inherent mutability of the will of free creatures merely as such,—the experience, the example, and, if need be, the interposition on God's part, requisite to enter into the eternal stability of a free creation,—the conditions for combining perfectly, the revelation to the creatures of the righteousness, truth, holiness, wisdom, condescension and love of God, with their nothingness, and yet their perfect blessedness,—such considerations, and perhaps many others, we may conclude, imposed what may be termed necessities on the plan of creation, not from any defect in God, but in the reconciliation, by His wisdom, of the inevitable and infinite inferiority of creatures with His perfection. All questions connected with such considerations, as well as the prior one, whether there should be a creation at all, could necessarily receive their solution only from God. The actual state of things is His solution, so far as it has gone. He has put things in train, to bring out the most perfect result, on the footing, according to his

wise and good will, that there should be a creation. These general principles, and the developments, which they make necessary, are the secret things that belong to Him ; not secret, merely as being undivulged, but as pertaining, in their original principles and realisation, to His place, and incommunicable. To imagine any difficulties in this region, would be the same as to entertain the question of the fitness of a creation. And, as to the practical exercise of man's powers, to suppose that those necessities in the coming creation, which were seen and provided for by the wisdom of God, can affect the conduct or condition of any particular man in his own place, would be identically the same, as to suppose, that the general truth, that all men are mortal, might be alleged as a warrant for committing suicide ; or that a man, in the full possession of his bodily powers, who should, from slothfulness, not move his arm, when required by duty to do so, might impute his failure to the want of the co-operation of God's all-sustaining power. So different is the sphere of God's being from the place of the creatures ! But we suffer doubts to enter our minds from this source, by carrying our own ways of perception and judgment back into the place of the Deity, whereby we unwittingly infringe the principle set forth at the beginning of this chapter, and in so far put faith aside.

The supposition of any difficulties in regard to what belongs to the place of God, is as absent from

the Scriptures, as it is contrary to common sense. As the highest Archangel would regard the will or the act of God as in itself a final reason, so He that was Higher than the highest, ever held the same as thus conclusive.—“He did this because it was written”—“But how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?”—Such are the ways, in which it is recorded that He found a clear light for his faith and obedience. The answers of God, in the 38th and three following chapters of Job, to the deep-felt yet pardonable complaints of Job’s perplexed mind, under sore trials which he could not understand, are just a series of *unanswered questions*, indicative of man’s utter ignorance of the Divine counsel in its source, in order that, by humbly acquiescing in this, and casting himself unreservedly on God, he may receive deliverance at His hand from evils, as to which his own wit can give no relief.

It may be useful, in concluding this chapter, to note that the schemes that have been advanced as to man’s accountability and destiny, appear reducible to these four :—

1. The scheme of Atheism, or that of the extinction of ends ; which regards all existence as a universe of mere means, through the contradiction and denial of all the higher powers and convictions of our nature.

2. The scheme of the Universalists, or that of the sacrifice of ends to means, inferring the impossibility

of founding the system of things on any stable moral basis.

3. The scheme of Necessity, which professes to establish an unchangeable state of things, through necessity wrought into the creature's nature, irreconcilable with our consciousness of freedom, and with the principles of righteousness implanted in our consciences, and, therefore, void of, and contradictory to all evidence.

And, 4. The scheme of Freewill, which, I have endeavoured to show, is exposed to none of these difficulties, and answers all the conditions of man's state and consciousness.

CHAPTER VI.

OF PREDESTINATION AND ELECTION, AND THEIR
RECONCILIATION WITH FREEWILL.

THE foregoing investigation has shown us, that confusion in apprehending the distinct places of the Creator and of the creature, must throw impenetrable darkness on their relations. To the place of the Creator belong the support and order of the being and destiny of all His creatures, with Incomprehensibility ; so that we cannot know the grounds and modes of His action, in their source in His infinite being. On the other hand, we have powers for the fulfilment of our substantive place, by God's grace, as well in us, as unto us, by His dispensations for revealing Himself to men ; the fundamental truth for our guidance being, that we are absolutely to submit to, honour and obey the Creator, and wholly to depend on Him, under the conviction, that all His acts are the dictates of wisdom, truth and goodness. The scheme of redemption in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, alone unfolds to us perfectly the relation

in which we stand to God, according to His purpose of salvation towards men in the fallen state.

As it is my object, in this chapter, to consider Predestination and Election chiefly in an abstract form, and to reserve for the next, the practical questions of our condition in the present life, I shall at present devote only a few paragraphs to connect what has gone before with the subject. The general principles, on which the following observations will rest, are these ;—1. That viewed in the sphere of Deity, that is, in God's action in the Absolute and Incomprehensible, man's ability to serve Him is, and can be, only in Christ, by the power of His Holy Spirit, without any share on man's side whatsoever ;—2. That this divine action can be contemplated by men, not by understanding, but only by faith ; and, 3. That the practical application of these truths to men, forms the test, whether they, as living and responsible beings, are willing to submit themselves to God in Christ on this footing, in order that they may thus find their place reconciled with that of the Creator, by their confessed nothingness being wholly subjected to His all-sufficiency.

Men are not spoken of in the Scriptures as a piece of moral anatomy, in which we may discover the mechanism of dead structure, capable of certain results, when moved by supposable powers. They are represented as living, self-actuating and responsible beings, called and able, by His grace, to do ser-

vice for God; able also to resist that grace, to oppose His will, and to frustrate, within their limits, His purposes. They do not appear as puppets to do a contrived part, ending in a contrived result. They are real actors, as creatures, earning for themselves their end.

Nor does God act towards men, as if they were mechanically moved, either directly, or by means of forces put in motion by Him, to do by compulsion what He pleases. He reveals Himself to men as their end and portion, whose will is their duty and life, and He asks of them free and willing obedience. And when they disobey, He regards the act as that of rebellion of subject to Sovereign, wherein the subject makes himself sovereign, and seeks to dethrone his lawful ruler. Freewill, the perfect service of which towards God, according to His will, as revealed in Christ, is the highest homage He can receive from creatures, makes man as a God, when used to throw off subjection to the true God.

And yet, when a man, looking humbly up to God from his lowly place as a creature, regards and confesses himself but as the dust of the earth, as a mere instrument for fulfilling some part of God's wise and great ways, as clay in the hands of Him the potter, to be moulded as He will, he makes a true and an upright confession. But, let it be observed, it is not the act of a puppet to make such a confession. It is the act of reason and conscience, nay the very highest

exercise of them, for a man so to do ; for this can proceed only from a just apprehension of the place of the Source and Author of all reason, truth and goodness, and of the infinite inferiority of all creatures compared with Him, and of their absolute dependence on Him ; and it is a confession, therefore, which can be made only by one having the largest and truest knowledge, both of God and of himself, with right-heartedness to make a just use of it. Such a man will have the properties of manhood most perfectly in him, and he will go forth to his duties in life, with the least of the character of a puppet, in the moral strength of faith and truth, recognising his duty and responsibility as God's creature. This is the spirit, which is taught us in the school of Christ, and which can be learned only there. Of this description is the character of Abraham, who is set forth as an example to all generations, on account of the resolute faith, with which he trusted and obeyed God ;—according to its threefold character,—1. His leaving his own country, on the divine command, and going he knew not whither, —prefiguring the renunciation of the world; 2. His regarding not “his own body now dead,” —prefiguring the renunciation of ourselves, and our own strength ; and, 3. His being ready to sacrifice Isaac,—prefiguring our renunciation in spirit even of God's gifts, in comparison with Himself. In this faith, he “against hope believed in hope” ; “he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was

strong in faith, giving glory to God ; and being fully persuaded, that what He had promised He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness ;” Rom. iv. 18, 20-22. Hence, Abraham was the type of “ the Author and Finisher of faith,” by whom these acts were substantiated in our nature in their utmost depths of meaning, and through whom the grace of new life by this means comes to men.

If any one shall, on the other hand, in pride and self-sufficiency, esteem himself of importance, and live for himself, he will find that the state is simply one of falsehood ; and he will be a mere instrument in God’s hands for accomplishing some end of His. But the substantive place of such a one will, in the meantime, be recognised, and he will be dealt with in conformity with it. Sin, it will be recollected, is rebellion against God. It is man, by his freewill, making himself the end of his action ; that is, making himself God. For this state of mind, considered as in active exercise, there is, and there can be, no tolerance on God’s part. It aims at the overthrow of the first of principles, the place of God himself ; and it involves the impiety of placing the creature in His room. It is an active, aggressive state of mind ; regarded absolutely, it is the very mind of Satan, the destroyer of all truth, order, and happiness, the enemy of God and man. With this state of mind God holds no parley whatever ; it is the Amalek, against which

war is waged from generation to generation for ever. The manifestation, therefore, of God's will towards it, is that of unrelenting opposition; He will blind it, mislead it, harden it, and manifest in it every degree of perverseness and corruption;—such is the righteous doom of the mind, that takes the attitude of resistance to the Creator, breaking the first law of creature being, and cutting itself off from the Source of Life. “The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked, and him that loveth violence, His soul hateth. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup;” Psalm xi. 5, 6. “With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward. For Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks;” Psalm xviii. 26, 27.

These views, which are a summary application of the principles of the last chapter, appear to make every thing plain as to man's condition and duty, on the supposition, that Predestination and Election are inseparable from God's place. Faith itself, the only upright state of man's spirit, admits, nay demands, that these be ascribed to God. A state of mind, that would deny them, would prove itself false and wicked by the denial. What place, then, has Moral Necessity in the true system of man's condition? None whatever. It is a mere intruder, founded on a two-fold error,—1. That of bringing God's incomprehen-

sible working, whereby He orders all things, and which can be known and acknowledged only by faith, into the region, and down to the level, of the creature, as a truth cognizable by the common understanding ; and, 2. That of using the truth thus misapplied, as a reason for misrepresenting the nature of man, which, to our consciousness, is entirely free from the alleged law of necessity.

The errors to which we are liable, as to the doctrines under consideration, appear to arise,—either from the denial, express or implied, of God's place altogether,—or from the assumption of our being under the law of Moral Necessity.

As to the former of these, it is worthy of remark, that the very largeness of our powers, the very dignity of the nature which God has given us, is made by men a hindrance to the understanding of their right place. Our minds are capable of contemplating large truths, with apparently infinite relations ; and we have freewill, after the image of that of God Himself, to make those truths and their relations its instruments. Freewill contains the principle of individuality, in its highest degree, and by means of it we can hold ourselves, or a creature-good chosen by us, our end or centre, to which we may direct all the truth and strength of our nature, obscured and abused though these will be by such a perversion. When we are in this mood, we are kings in our own esteem ;

we are free from the burden of responsibility to the true God; and we are conscious, for the time, of such a stability in our powers and our condition, that this state seems a reality to us. This is the natural condition of fallen man,—the continuation of the state of mind, in which the first transgression took place, and which speedily carries men into all forms of blindness and corruption. It is a singular instance of the deceitfulness of the human heart, that men bring this state of mind to judge of the truths, which connect them with God. The question truly at issue between us and God,—the struggle of conscience in our bosoms, which men often cannot understand, because they will not probe the matter to the bottom,—is, whether they will own themselves subject to Him in heart and will, or not. Overlooking this, and assuming in thought an equal level with God, they demand reasons to satisfy the mind in this position, that it should implicitly submit to Him. The state of mind has prejudged the decision. It has no faculty for conviction. Let them banish the gross sophistry; let them confess that they are dependent and helpless, and accept the grace of God with penitence and thankfulness;—and then, also, the decision is prejudged; submission and faith bring perfect peace, with the solution of all difficulties.

It is under this class, that we are to consider the case of Pharaoh, as set forth in the beginning of the book of Exodus. Pharaoh is an instance of man,

contending in the pride of his own will against God ; and he is exhibited in the Scriptures as an example and type of this form of character, both for warning to men in all ages, and to shew God's way of acting towards high-handed wilfulness, in vindication of His own righteous place. We are not entitled to say, that Pharoah's is the case of a man who had no grace from God ; it is rather the case of a man, who was truly wicked, because he rejected grace, and was bent on having no superior, even in God himself. The nature and end of a perfected instance of this character, is the lesson taught. God's dealing with such a will, so as to harden it still more, and bring the man to ultimate destruction, is according to the true principles of things, even more perfectly than the operation of the laws of nature, that he that takes poison, or that throws himself into the fire, must die ; the latter being laws merely physical, whereas the former belongs to spiritual truth, and to moral action according to such truth. It is quite true, that the hardening is, in another point of view, to be ascribed to Pharoah himself, (compare iv. 21, and viii. 15,) whose heart was set to exalt his own will above that of God, and whose punishment, in the first instance, consisted in receiving its own desire—the aggravation of this evil state ; but this must not be allowed to obscure the truth, that, when sin shows itself in determined opposition to God's will, the actors are liable to be judicially blinded and hardened by God to their

own destruction. God's grace may, and often does, forbear this punishment ; but in itself it is righteous ; of which any one may satisfy himself, by considering, that the wicked, who are so punished, could not make an objection to it, without self-accusation and self-contradiction.

The latter form of error as to the doctrines in question, is that by which they are supposed, through the influence of Moral Necessity, to control our creature powers, so as to affect our freedom, if not our responsibility ; and it may be best considered in reference, —1. to persons who hold men to be on this account not morally accountable, and, 2. to those who hold them morally accountable.

1. As to the first of these classes, the exclusion of moral necessity from our nature, and the acknowledgment of the place of the Deity, show the futility of their opinion. We have seen, that the all-comprehensive, all-sustaining power of God, does not exclude the possibility of a separate creation, or, consequently, of the existence of creature powers ; which powers may be of a passive character, or active, spiritual, and self-determining. The pretended justification of the error, therefore, proves too much. It is founded on the paradox of the creature's existence, separate from the Being of the Creator, which would equally well warrant the question, —whether creatures have any

powers or qualities at all? Nay, whether creation itself is possible, and exists? Does the holder of such an opinion ever doubt, whether he has power to move his arm, since God's overruling power may not second the effort? Or whether he may do his own will, for the same reason? The answer in such cases is what has been already made,—the totally different spheres of the Creator and the creatures. The practical reconciliation is, for man to believe the truth of his absolute dependence on God, and to do his duty. By this means, faith, and reason in its higher sense, will be satisfied; though the mere understanding may see nothing but contradictions. But that no one will believe himself entitled to follow the mere understanding in such a question, is certain from this, that if any one did so, he would refuse to exercise any power, corporeal, mental or spiritual, and, if possible, give himself over to utter inaction and impotency, (in other words, be what his very existence would contradict,) till he was satisfied that his creature powers were a reality, notwithstanding the all-pervading power of God. As the objector will not prove, in this way, his honest disbelief of the existence of creature powers, it follows, that what he demands is not creature powers, and truth to guide them, but irresponsibility in regard to God. What men in this state of mind truly aim at, is to make out a case of injustice in punishment, and, partly from the possibility of escape by this means, in the confusion brought

upon the question of responsibility, and partly under the influence of the indignation excited by the asserted injustice, to stifle their consciences, and find an excuse for remaining in the indulgence of their own wills, as Gods to themselves. To men in this state of mind, which is that of rebellion of heart against God, cloaked by self-blinding, no answer will ever be given, but one according to its own frowardness. If any one will persist in alleging, that he is retained in the condition of regardlessness or despite of God and His commandments, by an iron fate, he, on a false pretence, renounces the place of a moral and reasonable creature, and unmans himself; he declares himself a mere machine; and then, when just judgment befalls him, his mouth must be stopped by the words, in which the Apostle Paul retorts upon such a one his own principles,—“Nay, but who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why has thou made me thus?” Rom. ix. 19. This answer is one suitable to a corrupt mind, which tries to get rid of responsibility, by alleging a necessity in the will itself; and which, therefore, only betrays its own hypocrisy and falsehood, by appealing against the consequences of responsibility to a righteousness, which, on its own pretended principles, can have no existence.

2. I proceed to the consideration of Predestination and Election, in the light in which they are

viewed by the school of Edwards and the modern Calvinists,—whether under necessity systematically, as Edwards, or with merely an implied necessity, from the power of the overruling will of the Creator actually realized in men, as many more loosely view it,—yet expressly admitting moral responsibility. I have already stated, that this opinion seems an inconsistent one; and I do not mean to resume the argument on this point. We have now to consider the system in the light in which it appears to me, of the misconception of a true doctrine, by force of an erroneous theory of man's spiritual constitution, and of the intrusion of intellectual reasonings into the province of faith.

The Calvinistic view of these doctrines will be best seen, by the perusal of the third Chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith, “Of God's Eternal Decree.” It is as follows:—

“1. God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

“2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet hath He not decreed any thing, because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

“ 3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained unto everlasting death.

“ 4. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

“ 5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

“ 6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only.

“ 7. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.

“ 8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending to the call of God revealed in His word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the gospel.”

The eternal decree, which is set forth in these articles, as determining the final destinies of angels and men, is asserted to be unconditional—that is, not dependent on the moral condition and action of its subjects. At the same time, the condition and action, corresponding with the several destinies, are alleged to be also foreordained, as is stated in the 1st, 2d, and 6th articles, and in the 4th article of chapter 5th, which will be quoted in the next chapter. This 3d chapter thus makes the eternal decree of God, the Church’s declaration of the original and effective cause of every thing that comes to pass, by the moral actions of men, both good and evil, with their eternal condi-

tions. The rest of the Confession, so far as relates to creation, the fall, providence, redemption, and judgment, proceeds, accordingly, from this chapter, as its application or consequences. Hence, it is easy to see, how naturally the Calvinistic doctrine led to a stringent law of moral necessity, as the philosophical ground of it. The question which it involves, is not peculiar to Christianity, or even to revealed religion, but is one which relates to mankind universally. At the same time, being a fundamental one as to man's condition, and inseparable from it, it may be expected to be specially illustrated in the Scriptures.

The subjects, with which the doctrine in question is connected, and their natural order, appear to be these,—1. The Nature and Attributes of God, and His primary acts in forming a creation in the condition of goodness, 2. The nature, qualities, and primary acts (relatively to God) of man, including the fall, 3. The secondary acts of God in reference to sin developed in man, or His acts of grace, redemption and judgment, and 4. The secondary acts of man under grace towards redemption. The doctrine under consideration obliterates these distinctions, and represents the divine acts, set forth as primary and secondary, as being all alike primary,—or rather, it represents the secondary acts as primary, and the primary, as secondary, or at least as merely subsidiary; and, consequently, the secondary acts of man receive also a primary

place, as being of absolute certainty in connection with the will of God.

I do not object to the doctrine in question, on the ground of the absolute supremacy ascribed to the Creator, in ordering all events and destinies according to his will. The general objection, which lies to it, is that it in a great degree overlooks the fact, that the Creator's place is in the Infinite and Incomprehensible. We are not warranted, merely by being assured that a truth is in His being, to bring it into the manifested scheme of His dealings with creatures. We may have no adequate knowledge of its grounds and limits, in reference to the end for which we would use it. The attempt may imply such a mingling of the great and unsearchable ways of Deity, with the powers of the creatures, as is contrary to first principles in creation. And the misapplication of the truth may be subversive of the condition, in which the creature is at the time, according to the divine purpose in him. All this, I conceive, may be alleged of the Calvinistic representation of the doctrines under consideration. It professes to be the assertion by the Church, as from the Creator's supreme place, that His will to appoint angels and men to eternal happiness and misery, is the reason, why the individuals arrive at these respective conditions. This is an announcement from the Incomprehensible ; for Supreme Disposing power, which is the only ground, on which either Predestination or Election can be asserted in this sense, is in

the Incomprehensible. This at once points out the difficulty of connecting the doctrine with the fact; for we have no evidence that such a doctrine is realized, as a fact, in man's condition in this life, and, on the contrary, every reason to believe the opposite.

Accordingly, a corresponding general objection lies to this doctrine, from its overthrowing the place and acts of the creatures, in their responsible place; for although the earthly condition is in itself temporary, and must ultimately bend itself to the fulfilment of the Incomprehensible in the Divine purpose, it is not, because of this, the less real for its own ends; nor are the acts of God in reference to it at the time, otherwise than most real. A mere saving of the creature's acts, in articles asserting the all-prevailing Divine will in producing them, will not obviate this consequence. There is no recurrence to the acts, as the responsible creature's acts, in any part of the Confession.

I request the reader's attention to the grounds, on which these objections appear to me justly applicable to the Calvinistic scheme.

Election, as it can be known in the creature's place, is, *in reference to God*, the assertion on His part, and the corresponding recognition by faith on man's, of the truth arising from His essential relation to His creatures, and revealed in pursuance of it, that He has an election in truth and righteousness, which, necessarily, from His perfection, is defined, individual

and eternal. Such is all we can possibly know of election *in God*. And this knowledge, or rather this contemplation and conviction of faith, regards what is wholly in the Incomprehensible. We know not how to join this conviction of faith with the actual state of men in the world; and we must abstain from the attempt, not merely from our absolute ignorance, but from the thing contemplated being in the Creator's place, and not the creature's. On the other hand, *in regard to man*, faith assures us of salvation by election to those who are honouring and obeying the righteous Sustainer and Ruler of all things, because their minds agree with the Electing Mind, and are righteous; and it assures us of condemnation, by exclusion from election, to those who remain in the opposite state of mind, because this state of mind is at variance with the Electing Mind, and is wicked. So far is clearly deducible from the Creator's place and character. We can know nothing more of election than this, because faith on our part can reach no higher; and the Scriptures teach us no more, because they speak to minds, only in so far as they are capable of faith. Grant, that the Scriptures declare election to be an absolute truth in God; this does not enable us to see its operation as from His place, and it is but one of many truths in Him, all of which, as well as His whole being, are absolute; and, therefore, our knowledge and admission by faith, of election as absolute in Him, cannot warrant an *a priori* determination by

us, either of its operation in Himself, or of its place and operation relatively to the exercise of His other attributes, in the scheme of creation and redemption, and as to the events therein.

We have no difficulty, in regard to the peculiar Divine Attributes and Essences,—such as, the Trinity of Persons, and Unity of Substance, the Omnipresence, Omniscience, Eternal Existence, and Unchangeableness,—in seeing, that we can contemplate them only in the light, in which faith presents them to us, and not a step otherwise, or beyond; and that, when we attempt to deduce, from the convictions, with which faith furnishes us in regard to them, conclusions according to the rules of the understanding, the very first step is unreal, if not absurd. Personal election, as a truth in God, is of exactly the same character. It is one of the aspects of His essential relation to His works, as Creator, Preserver, and Supreme Dispenser and Lord. It will manifest itself only in harmony with His whole attributes, and in such a way as to declare His glory among His moral and intelligent creatures. It respects the ultimate condition of the individuals of the creatures; whereas we contemplate the attributes before mentioned as properties of the Creator; but, since it is the exercise of His infinite attributes, this implies, that, until manifested in fact, it exists in God in the Absolute and Incomprehensible.

It seems a first principle, in contemplations of this

nature, that we can arrive at the Incomprehensible in God only from the fact; never at the fact from the Incomprehensible. The will of God to create the things that exist, and the qualities of those things,—all which have proceeded from the Incomprehensible, and are revelations of the Divine action in that sphere,—are known to us only from the things themselves, through our exercise of observation and faith in regard to them. We cannot descend to them from the Incomprehensible *a priori*; this would suppose the transgression of the principles, mentioned at the beginning of the last chapter. Nor does the act of faith by which we recognise the Creator's hand, give us any knowledge of the manner, in which His act is connected with the things created. Notwithstanding our faith, that remains as incomprehensible as ever. The existence of the things, their qualities, and their uses,—which we learn from observation,—we carry up to God by faith, in an ascription to Him of power and goodness in their creation; but we bring down by faith no knowledge of His operation, or of new qualities;—the former is inscrutable, because God's place is so; the latter we must learn by renewed observation. Anterior to the discovery by observation, we can carry up nothing to the Divine Source.

The same is, if possible, even clearer, in regard to results in creation, that happen through the actions of moral and responsible creatures. We cannot reach the Divine incomprehensible purpose in them, except

through the actions themselves, with all their qualities, as proceeding from moral and responsible wills. The knowledge of that purpose, is by an act of faith towards God upon the moral actions regarded as done. If the moral powers of men are a reality, and not a fiction ; if men have a true creature being, with free-will, and are justly responsible to God for their actions, because of it ; the exercise of these is the medium, by which we arrive at the apprehension of the final condition, which they shall reach, according to the Divine purpose. It is men, as so viewed, whom our faith refers to God, and in whom we find the interpretation of his incomprehensible purpose in regard to them ; and we cannot learn that purpose without this element. At the same time, as already observed in a more general sense, our faith leaves the manner of operation of the Divine power to create and to sustain men, absolutely in the Incomprehensible.

There is a difference in the act of faith, as well as in the conclusion of reason, in regard to God's relation to things, in their origination, and in what happens through the exercise or operation of their creature powers, after they have come into existence. In the former case, the result is ascribed absolutely to the divine act, inscrutable though it is ; in the latter it is ascribed to the creature, and not to the divine act, in the same sense. A new incomprehensibility here comes into view,—the reconciliation of true creature existence with the overruling and all-sustaining being

of God. Our faith, as we saw in the last chapter, requires us firmly to believe both, for their several ends. Hence, we no longer ascribe the creature acts to God. They are creature acts, to manifest creature ways, and they possess true creature qualities; because creation is not an illusion. Divine power sustains creature being as such, and does not subvert or supersede it. We now recognise creation,—not as an instrument by which God creates,—but as the means, in true creature being, by which He manifests His ends and purposes, under His incomprehensible providence. This is true even as to things inanimate, and all lower forms of life; and much more, as to the acts of moral and intelligent creatures.

Revelation,—express and absolute as it is, of God's predestination, creation and disposal of all things, and of all events, for the revelation of His own glory,—does not change our position in this point of view. With the help of God's Spirit, it purifies and strengthens our powers of observation and reflection; it enlarges and deepens our knowledge; it adds substance and elevation to every subject of contemplation; and thus it affords faith true ground to rest on. But it comes to us, as being in the place of creatures; and it does not lift us out of it. It does not raise us above faith; its way of instruction is, "from faith to faith;" Rom. i. 17. The revelation of the judgment connects it with "the deeds done in the body." It is lawful for us to "judge nothing before the time." Prophecy itself,

which furnishes so clear a proof (if proof were needed) of the certainty of divine predestination, does not warrant us in believing, that men's actions are under the constraint of a cause realized in them. We are not justified in interpreting on a different principle the passages of Scripture, which affirm predestination and election in express terms.

Take, as the leading example, Romans, ix. 6-24. The Apostle's words are addressed to faith, in order to give light to our spirits, as to the manner in which they are to contemplate the supremacy of the divine action towards men; and, according to his manner, they engraft upon a special matter,—the rejection of the Jews, and the call of the Gentiles,—enlarged views of the operation of election on God's part. Do we inquire as to the fulfilment of the divine promise to Abraham's seed? Verses, 7-9, inform us, that the fulfilment, like the faith to which the promise was given, was not of the flesh, but connected itself with a distinct act of God, in order that His will might be wholly in it. Do we suppose, that this made the course free for the fulfilment of the promise after the natural course of generation? Verses, 10-13, reiterate the lesson, by throwing us upon a new act of God, by the election of the younger son before the elder, prefiguring the perfect salvation by the younger brother,—the Second, or spiritual, Adam,—upon the rejection of the elder,—the first, or carnal, Adam. Passing from the type to the substance,—do we inquire, whether we are to regard ourselves as absolutely in God's hands, under the

common sin of the fallen state, to be righteously dealt with as He pleases, since, in that state, (see v. 29, and x. 20), no man has any thing to claim at His hands, and absolute self-renunciation is our first and indispensable duty? Verses 14-18, answer in the affirmative, in the most absolute terms, on the authority of God's words to Moses, in two opposite forms, — the one declaring mercy; the other judgment; for the end of revealing God's character. Shall a wicked opposer of God question the righteousness of his being visited with the reward of unrighteousness, because of God's supreme power to order all destinies as He will? Verses, 19-22, give an answer to such a one, according to his forwardness, as already noticed at p. 93. And, finally, will a faithful man be instructed, in what spirit he is to apply to himself his hope of salvation? Verses, 23-4, ascribe the blessing to God's free grace, as unreservedly as the reprobation of the wicked has just been referred to His absolute will; from whose case (in the spirit of David, 2 Sam. vi. 22), a lesson of increased humiliation is drawn by such a man, since the difference arises solely from that grace, and not from any inherent strength or goodness in himself.

All this, I submit, is the reflection of faith, as in man's place, looking upwards towards the Incomprehensible in God, and from thence judging in the different points of view, in which man's hopes, interests and actions may be so regarded. It was not intended, by these illustrations of election, to confound

together the places of the Creator and of the creature, by bringing down the former to the level of the latter,—the Incomprehensible into the comprehensible,—so as to enable us to state the former as the intelligible premises in a scheme, showing why the events of the latter come to pass.

If, then, one were to judge, that a righteous man is righteous, and attains salvation, and that a wicked man is wicked, and receives eternal punishment, because of the divine decree; he would, I conceive, commit the error of arriving at the fact from the Incomprehensible;—and it is just this error multiplied, to say, as in the Westminster Confession, that all the saved are righteous, and inherit eternal life, and all the reprobate wicked, and receive eternal death, because of that decree. The reward and the punishment are conditions known mainly from revelation; but the conduct, without which they cannot be connected with individual men, belongs to the men. Our conviction by faith, founded on undoubted grounds both of reason and revelation, that God must, and does, order the present and ultimate condition and destiny of men, does not warrant us to deduce the acts, viewed as responsibly performed by them, which are the cause of that condition and destiny, or, consequently, that condition and destiny themselves, from His will, *a priori*, as the power that gave rise to them. We have no faculty, fit to view the matter in this direction. We must act the faith upon the facts,—

that is, arrive at the Incomprehensible from the facts; not deduce the facts from the faith,—that is, arrive at the facts from the Incomprehensible. Not only so,—but our faith denies any connection between the facts, and the divine will, as their cause in this sense; for it connects the divine will with the formation of the creature will, from which they proceed as their cause. Derivation of the facts from the divine will, therefore, would be to mingle two things utterly heterogeneous,—the place of the Creator, and the acts of the creature;—or else to deny the reality of the latter. We cannot conceive, nor dare we try to do so, how it is, that the divine will can produce any effect, on the use of his powers, by the moral and responsible creature. Far from the fact revealing the Incomprehensible in this sense, it, on the contrary, brings us to the opposition and paradox, mentioned in the last chapter; the only solution of which, by the submission of faith on man's part, both illustrates the reality of the creature place, and thereby shews, that the derivation of his responsible acts from the divine will, as a cause, is an impossible conception to our minds.

As to the responsible acts of creatures, then, our faith as to the divine overruling will, even while it rests in that will absolutely as the originating ground of them, as of all things, has reference, in so doing, to the acts, considered as actually done by their actors, and not to the acts as what have been caused to be done by His will;—according to the explanation

given at p. 68, of the manner in which we should regard creature being to be sustained. It tells us, that all things, do them who may, and how they may; are predestined by God to effect His purposes, and that He will bring into judgment every soul for his share in them. But this is an act of faith, and not the perception of an intelligible relation by way of cause and effect,—a looking upward, and away from the facts, in order to confess, in the spirit, what the facts, in themselves, and our understandings in contemplating them, would deny, or, at least, would utterly fail to convey and receive. The relation of God to the actual doing of the facts by the actors, remains,—not merely unknown, but—absolutely incomprehensible and inscrutable; and its revelation gives, and was intended to give, no *reason* for their existence, in reference to the creatures, as the responsible doers of them. Even the man of faith, who ascribes his condition unreservedly to God's grace, and who regards himself only with self-renunciation, has reference, when so doing, to acts solely his own. And, in his constant prayers for Divine aid, he asks for help in his creature place, and looks for his being enabled, as a man, to do his duty. His faith refuses to mingle the infinite and incomprehensible being of God with his own limited and dependent being, even when acknowledging, that power for every good action comes only from His direct grace upon him. From the essential character, therefore, of God's

relation to us, it follows that this relation cannot be set forth, for any intelligible purpose, in an exposition of His ways in the world, in order to account for the conduct of the creatures, in their responsible places of action in this world, and their ultimate destinies. The use of the revelation of it, and of our faith in it, for declaring God's supreme place, *to faith*, for adoration, trust and obedience towards Him, in the acknowledgment of that place, and for revealing what He would have known of Himself and the creatures thereby, is quite a different thing. It arises entirely from the confession of faith, *a posteriori*; it is not a judgment of the Divine action *a priori*.

The Calvinistic system rejects these views. Its *a priori* and unconditional decrees are set forth, in the scheme which it presents of God's dealings with His creatures, as the direct and effective foundation of all the responsible actions of the creatures, and of their destinies in eternal life and eternal death. The second article on the subject of Election is as follows:—"Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet hath He not decreed any thing, [because He foresaw it as future, or] as that which would come to pass upon such conditions." Which position, accordingly, is practically applied, in the following article, by the assertion of unconditional predestination of angels and men to eternal life and death. Thus, as would appear, in order to reach the very root of the Incom-

prehensible, the Calvinistic doctrine rests the happiness and misery of the intelligent creatures, on the decree of God's absolute will, apart from their righteousness and unrighteousness.

This, surely, is contradictory to plain reason, or, at least, unintelligible to it. Suppose a man were to die of starvation, or in consequence of falling into a furnace,—would it be an intelligible proposition, that, viewed in reference to the Divine absolute will, he came by his death, not from want of food, or from being burned, but through that will unconditionally? The assumption of a man, unavoidably brings us into the midst of conditions; for man's whole being, like that of every creature, is a being of conditions; and the Divine incomprehensible being reveals itself in and among creatures, only by means of conditions. The Calvinistic decree assumes, that we can rise into the place of Deity, anterior to creation, and from thence describe the operation of the Divine will as to the destiny of the future creatures;—an imagination, which requires only to be expressed in plain terms, in order to show its unsubstantial character. It is the application of logic to the contemplation, by faith, of the Incomprehensible,—an operation inevitably leading to what usually is palpably absurd, but always is unreal. We can understand “the invisible things” of God, only by “the things that are made;” Rom. i. 20; through faith in his operation; Heb. xi. 3. We cannot conceive or know them *a priori*. The

incongruity of so viewing physical events, has just been pointed out; but how much more does this appear as to events, which owe their characters to the moral actions of responsible creatures. The supposition of such creatures, some ordained to eternal life, and some to eternal death, by an *unconditional* decree,—that is, apart from the states, which deserve these ends, and give rise to them,—is inconceivable. What explains and justifies the results, is the ways in the creatures, of which they are the appropriate ends; and it is the combination of these two things, which alone forms the revelation of God's will and character.

The objection to the Calvinistic decree, let it be observed, is not,—that creation is referred to the Divine will absolutely and unconditionally. All creation, and all its parts, and all their qualities, with their destinies, cannot but spring from that will, without any reason other than its inscrutable act. Nor, consequently, is it the objection,—that the Divine will, in appointing the destinies of the creatures, ought to be regarded as guided or prescribed to, by what was foreseen to be future in the development of the creatures,—which is the way of bringing down God's incomprehensible action to the level of man's understanding, which the Arminian system opposes to the Calvinistic.

The objection is this,—that, in regard to the creation, which has actually proceeded from the Divine

will, and which is, therefore, the revelation to us of the incomprehensible purpose of that will, the Calvinistic system rejects that revelation, as to the relation of the parts to one another,—that is, the righteousness, truth and wisdom, which appear in creation, considered as a unity for revealing a purpose,—and refers us, instead, as to the final condition of the creatures, to an assertion of the Divine operation *a priori* in the Incomprehensible. But we can learn this, it has been submitted, only by faith upon the facts. What ought to be referred to the Divine absolute and inscrutable will, is,—not the final condition of angels and men, viewed as a state, insulated, and separated from the unity of their whole existence, in which that will has placed it,—but is its appointment of the totality of their history, including its issue, as a component part of it. But this,—the true subject of the Divine pre-ordination,—is Divine action in the Incomprehensible. It is a subject, with which the understanding has nothing to do. It is for the contemplation and acknowledgment of faith, by submission, trust and adoration. Far from interfering with the use of our creature powers, it invites and demands this just exercise of them, and convicts us of falsehood, when we refuse it. It cannot, therefore, be set forth as the intelligible cause of creature actions and destinies; for this would be similar to saying, in the case before supposed, that the man did not die from inanition or burning, but from the

Divine unconditional decree. There will be an opportunity of illustrating this fallacy at farther length, in the second section of next chapter, in considering the Calvinistic doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints, which seems founded on it.

It may have been supposed, that the final state, from its eternity, must present something more in accordance with the absolute will of God, than the transitory state of the creature; and that to connect with that absolute will, the latter and former states together, might infer the Arminian view, that God's ordaining power was regulated by what He foresaw as future. I have pointed out what appears the error in this opinion,—the supposition, that we can reach the incomprehensible purpose of God, *a priori*, or otherwise than through faith upon the facts, in combination with His dealings with them and in them, as actually existing. The contemplation of the eternal state, by itself, will not give us a just revelation of God's purpose and glory. The unchangeable condition of creatures is as absent from His absolute being, as that which is temporary and probationary. Their condition in the one state entered into His eternal will, as really as that in the other,—nay, upon Calvinistic principles, was eternally decreed. A decree embracing the former, apart from the latter, must, therefore, be essentially defective, since, in fact, as well as in the truth of the Divine purpose, they are inseparably connected. The Divine character is the end, which creation was form-

ed and redeemed to reveal; and this is seen only by means of the combination of the temporary with the eternal state. If the latter state, viewed by itself, is held the end, a mere creature state will be exalted to this distinction, instead of the revelation of the glory of God by means of it. Hence, the unconditional decree is not only an instance, to the most gigantic extent, of arriving at the fact from the Incomprehensible; but it strikes out, from our idea of God's character, the condition, according to which alone our faith can contemplate it,—that God awards eternal happiness or misery, according as righteousness or unrighteousness are manifested by their subjects.

The Divine action in the Incomprehensible is to be seen interpreted in the fact, and we must, therefore, look only to the creature's powers, and to the use he makes of them, in order to discover the reason of his ultimate destiny; and thus shall we find the perfect justification of what God shall manifest, by means of the creature, of His unsearchable will. In this way, we shall see predestination and election revealed with self-vindication, as the manifestation in creation of the Divine truth, righteousness, wisdom, love, mercy, and other moral attributes; which never can be the case, if we start with the principle, that these Divine acts are the assertion of the absolute will of God, in the production of the moral actions, and of the final destiny, of the creatures. To place our state on this footing, will effectually obscure the revelation of God's

true character. His election is absolute; but it is in harmony with the universal declarations of His grace—that “He willeth not the death of a sinner;” that “His goodness and mercy are over all His works;” that Christ is “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;” and that the gospel, that “Christ tasted death for every man,” is to be preached to “every creature under heaven.” These truths, the declaration of which to men, (I speak of those to whom the knowledge of the gospel comes), enters vitally into the development of their moral character, are essential to the revelation of God’s election of men; John xv. 22, 24. Man, who is made in the image of God, is the revelation, in creation, of His incomprehensible being. Hence, it is in the working of man’s faculties in actual life, under the operation of God’s grace in Christ, that we shall learn His will by man’s means; and this, in the opposite aspects,—of His true image, by Christ and his Church,—and of what is not in Him, but is contradictory to Him, by the disobedient. We shall never attain this knowledge, by means of an *a priori* principle, which, in this sense, is merely an abstraction without a ground,—that God’s absolute will gives rise to all that is in man; an assertion at once unmeaning and calculated to mislead, when made to and concerning moral and responsible creatures.

The supposed unconditional decree truly sets aside the creature place of moral responsibility. The tran-

scendent reality of the Divine pre-ordaining will, does not hinder the reality of the Divine work,—the creature's responsible being. There is surely a great difference between the exercise of the will of God, in the formation of creatures, in order that, according to His eternal counsel, He may reveal by them His glory, as they develop creature ways under His righteous and gracious dealings with them; and its exercise, to decree the ultimate conditions of the creatures, and, subordinately, their moral acts, by which those conditions shall be reached. The former is comprehensible by us, because it acknowledges the reality of the creature place, and is the state of things felt to be actually existing; but the latter is incomprehensible and unreal for us, because we cannot connect it with the actual condition of the creatures, without being convinced, that it supersedes the creature place and responsibility. The former shows us sin proceeding from the abuse by the creature of the real powers of his true nature, contrary to the righteous command of God; the latter, according to the only principles of judgment we have, derives it from the direct will of God, and denies this consequence upon subtleties, which, however they may seem to silence the understanding, cannot satisfy the conscience. The Calvinistic decree both assumes this latter form, and applies it to men, as a fact realized in this life.

As the Calvinistic principle overthrows the crea-

ture place by the Incomprehensible, so the Arminian view,—that God decrees only what He foresees to be future in the creature,—uses the creature place to set aside the Divine Incomprehensible. The ground of both errors humbly appears to me to be the same,—the attempt to join together, by means of propositions intelligible to our understandings, the places and acts of the Creator and of the creature; which sets aside faith, and can lead only to mistake and confusion.

To rest salvation and condemnation, therefore, as Calvinistic confessions do, on decrees of Election and Reprobation, is to place the explanation of the plan of the moral government of the world, upon what is absolutely unknown to us, in such a relation. He must have an overweening opinion of the capacity and place of men, who can suppose, that they may use an absolute divine truth as on their own level, because faith brings to them one or two downward aspects of it. The question will always remain, whether God has given such a truth to men, as a truth for the practical understanding, on which, as premises, they can lay the basis of His dealings with His creatures? A right-hearted Calvinist makes no such use of election, in regard to his own individual case. Election, in that sense, is not the external and declared principle of God's dealing with men in this present time. It yet remains, as a truth, real, but unapplied, in the depths of His unsearchable ways. It will not come forth, as a fact, into the creature's region, until the judgment;

because in this, the time of the probation of men, true grace to every man, which arises from divine attributes, as essential and as absolute, as those on which eternal election rests, is an indispensable element of probation. To preach a present election, in an exclusive sense, is, therefore, out of time ; it forestalls the divine purpose, and spoils the present testimony. In what sense the gospel is, nevertheless, truly the preaching of an election, will appear in the fifth section of next chapter.

I have thus endeavoured to show, that the Calvinistic doctrine of election is exposed to the fatal objection, of not appreciating the incomprehensibility of the place of God, in reference to his creatures, and of bringing His action down to their level. It is a specious position, that if faith, resting upon the light, which even reason gives of the Divine perfection, and still more on express revelation, judges certainly, that all things and events are ordered according to the power and will of God, it must be lawful, nay, imperative, for the Church to declare this to be their foundation. But the use of this position now objected to, involves the confounding of the Creator's place for faith, adoration and obedience, in His sphere of Deity, with His revelation of Himself also *in* and *by means of* the place of men themselves, for the proof of them according to their actual condition as creatures. And this error overthrows the latter place,

and its tendency is, wholly to frustrate the Divine purpose in man.

The Calvinist, following up the principle, of the irresistible operation of predestination among men in this present life, construes the spiritual state of the unconverted sinner in the sense of moral incapability or death, and regards his will as being as powerless to do an act of faith, as a dead body is to revive itself; and with this he joins the notion of an irresistible Divine power to recover coming forth on some, while the others remain necessarily in their original state of impotence. This representation is entirely one suitable to operations among natural things. Dead bodies, some revived to natural life, and others left in death, will furnish the same; and even cases in mechanics, (a favourite mode of illustration with Edwards),—such as, that a body must remain on the ground, if no power more than equivalent to its own weight be applied to raise it, but will yield to a greater power, when applied,—is only circumstantially different. The use of the terms, “moral,” “spiritual,” “motives,” “the will,” “the conscience,” “fears,” “hopes,” in man’s spiritual trial, makes no difference in the substantial character of the conception, according to this system, for the conception evacuates these terms of any characteristic meaning, inconsistent with what the idea of cause and effect suggests, and demands the intervention of a cause, to enable the will to operate in the way required. But it cannot be allowable thus to

destroy the character of the will. A man's will, in the fallen state, has the grace of true optional power; and, to represent its condition as death,—in the absolute sense of being so destitute of Divine grace, as to be incapable of action towards good, until a change shall happen to it, bringing revivification to the individuals separately, (and never at all to the non-elect,)—is to confound spiritual with natural being, and to extinguish the creature's place by means of the incomprehensible acting of the Deity, in direct contradiction of Scripture, in which He is uniformly represented as dealing with men, as responsible and under probation.

It is not, however, because of the necessary power of the will, the less true, that the act of turning to God is done by the power of His grace. So far is this from not being true, that, as was shown in the last chapter, it is the first and spontaneous act of the man of faith to acknowledge it, and to rest upon it; and it is to his doing this, that his will owes its character of righteousness. But, on the other hand, when we find a man continuing in sin, we feel that it would be false and impious to ascribe his state to the want of God's grace, for no other reason than that this would imply, that, on the fall, impotency had been left upon man's moral powers. Grace comes to us, by our opening our hearts to receive it, that is, by our submitting to the truth; and when we do so, our minds tell us, not that we are now subject to a cause, which previously was not in operation, but that now we are in the

truth, and that previously we were in falsehood. And hence it is, that no man can say, that he is destitute of grace, without self-contradiction and self-condemnation; for this were to say, that he is in the state of conscious disobedience, and wilful error, for which he is justly liable to condemnation, and the guilt of which he would only increase, by imputing it to God's withholding a cause of change. The ascription by a man of his faith to Divine grace, is his own act of reflection, his own free admission, in heart and conscience, of his creature conviction; and this is the faculty in us, which appreciates, and, in some measure, anticipates, the revelation of God's all-sustaining and all-disposing power, and, as a derivative from this, of His predestination and election. But this implies no description of any act on His part, which corresponds to it, as a cause to an effect; for this would be to mingle the being of the Creator with that of the creature, or to join the Incomprehensible in God with man's comprehensible and subject existence. Just as, for the same reason, want of faith cannot possibly warrant the inference, that God is the producer of that state of mind;—which, besides, would just be the adoption of the ground, on which, as we saw under the preceding head, some deny man's moral responsibility; and which can be answered only by showing, that his moral powers really exist. In other words, faith, and want of faith, that is, the conditions of truth and of falsehood towards God, are the only

co-relatives in our minds to grace, and its absence; and these, being conditions of the creature, and not of the Creator, cannot give us any knowledge of grace and its absence, farther than is comprised in these creature conditions themselves. Such are the natural forms of the outgoings of the responsible creature's mind, towards his Infinite and Incomprehensible Creator and Preserver. The work of the redemption of man, is, on God's part, in the Incomprehensible, as perfectly as the works of creation and providence.

It follows from all this, that grace to fallen man exists in him in the form of a life, which penetrates the whole man, and has fixed relations to God, as its Author and End, and which, in so far as regards our creature place and responsibility, will prove to us a blessing, or the reverse, according as we are faithful or unfaithful in the use of it, under God's farther dealings with us for our trial, by His providence, and the preached gospel. The evangelist preaches the truth of Christ, in the conviction that there is a preparedness in the consciences of his auditors, to understand its power, and to respond to it; and that this is not less true, when his word proves "a savour of death unto death," than when it proves "a savour of life unto life." Man's nature is made substantive for its creature place. We have no direct cognizance, as preliminary to our ability to act, of the fact of a Divine work upon us, in creation, redemption, and continual preservation, as the cause of that ability. This,

were it possible, would render us merely conscious puppets; and it is some such contradictory conception, if I mistake not, which is the ground of a great part of what is of erroneous tendency in Calvinism, by handing over the spiritual operation of the grace of the gospel to the province of the understanding, and so bringing into it an element of unreality, equally as of error. Our admission of the source of grace, is the reflex act of our substantive being, in the upright use of reason, will and conscience, the life by faith, which,—not through any natural strength of ours, but by God's grace towards us in Christ,—is in, or is striving to be in, every man. The righteousness of obedience, and the unrighteousness of disobedience, are especially our own, because it is from the depths of our own being that they spring; while the former owes its genuine character to its disclaiming self-origination; as the latter likewise does, to its resting in, and being satisfied with self.

The view of election, which I have attempted to meet, naturally gave rise to an opposite state of opinion, against which the arguments of Edwards were directed, and which attempted to magnify man's responsibility, by diminishing his dependence on his Creator. This may be regarded as the revulsion from one of the most important of the errors, which appear in the mode of statement of the doctrines of religion in the Confessions of the Reformers,—that which con-

veys the impression, that predestination, election, grace, and whatever other terms are used, for expressing the supremacy of the Creator, and the absolute dependence on Him of His creatures for every thing in their lot, and specially of the faithful for every blessing, infer in themselves, to the faith of those who confide in them, a prejudice and injury, the burden of which operates in this present life on those, who at the judgment shall be excluded from eternal life. In consequence, election, when clung to in determined faithfulness to the Divine honour, is often found rather to harden, than to soften the spirit. But far more commonly, this doctrine is viewed with secret repugnance and dread ; often, doubtless, from unrighteous resistance to the Divine will ; but sometimes also, through misapprehension of the true bearing of the doctrine, it is denied or explained away, even by pious men, almost at the expense of yielding the inalienable supremacy of the Creator. It appears to me, that these states of mind arise mainly from the mistake, of regarding the revelation of the absolute dependence of men on the Creator, as being one of the evils, instead of one of the blessings, of the fall.

Let the subject be looked at in the only point of view, in which it is lawful for a creature to regard it, —from our own place by faith,—and then election is seen to be part of a larger truth, which it is our privilege and duty to acknowledge and rejoice in,—the necessary and essential relation of the Creator to

the creatures, by which He sustains them, and orders all that pertains to them, and the certain blessedness, by that relation, of all those who are responding in uprightness to the Creator's supremacy. This relation, and its consequences, did not come into existence on the fall. It is a truth governing the relation of creatures to the Creator in all circumstances, though varying its character according to their condition. It could be but partially known, in the original state of man, on account of the independence attaching to a state of innocence and freedom. The opportunity for its being fully disclosed arose under the fall, through God's grace bringing good out of evil, by presenting Himself to men, as the ground of their trust through faith, instead of their own ruined nature; which grace of God towards us, operative from the first, was revealed in its largeness and perfection, on the manifestation of Christ in our nature, and of his accepted sacrifice therein. It is wrong, then, to suppose, that being subject to God's election is a *penalty* of the fall. On the contrary, it is the necessary form of the revelation then made of our true relation to Him, and so becomes the last test of the righteousness of faith, proving whether the heart will renounce self-dependence, and cast itself wholly on God's grace. For, suppose all men were acknowledging their subjection to God's absolute election, and were living in conformity with that acknowledgment,—that is, standing in faith, and giving obedience,—of what prejudice

would election be to any of them? They would all be subject to a fundamental truth of God, and that truth would be their salvation. We have no right to view election otherwise, nor have we any faculty, by which we can do so. Men will be condemned, not because of election, but because of sin; and election will execute itself in righteousness, in the approval of the obedient, and the rejection of the disobedient, according to the Divine eternal counsel therein revealed.

Now, I submit that election, when so regarded,—and this is the sense, in which, as a derivative from faith for salvation, it is a precious and blessed doctrine,—contains, to the faith of those who find it a rest and comfort, no element permitting acquiescence in the exclusion from salvation of any brethren in this life. What can be a stronger proof of this, than what Paul says of his feelings in regard to the Jews, in Romans, ix. 3, and x. 1? It has reference to the condition of heart of the individual himself towards God, acknowledging and giving obedience to His grace in Christ, and conscious of His complacent and electing love towards all, who humbly seek so to please Him, and to a church of the elect composed of such. The knowledge, that there are others who will be rejected, does not come through the idea of unconditional election, but through observation of men's ways, and express revelation of God's purpose therein; which purpose, in the meantime, excludes none, but invites all, and requires His faithful people to second His grace towards

the rebellious. Neither does the eternal doom of the impenitent connect itself in the mind with election, but with the sense of their rebellion against God, and their wickedness. In this life, the call to all is to Election, as will appear in next chapter. I conceive therefore, that the hardness, judgment, and sense of preference and exclusion, which have come to be associated with the doctrine of election, and which have rendered it repulsive and unprofitable, have no just foundation in the nature of that doctrine itself, but arise from unwisely penetrating into the Incomprehensible in the use of it.

Predestination and Election are not, then, to be viewed as executors, brought into existence at the fall, to apply decrees of mercy and justice towards men. This were to speak of them, as if they were earthly things, within the range of our understandings. On the contrary, being parts of a large truth, on which the stability and blessing of all creation depend, they ought, in all men, to be, by faith, the parent of reverence and obedience ; while the right acknowledgment of them is one of the deepest tests of an obedient and reconciled heart. Like all the other truths of the gospel, they have, in their first aspect, an element of grace and mercy, and are meant for probation, before being manifested in judgment. The true practical reason for one man being saved, and another lost, and the only reason intelligible to us, is, that the former, when tried, proves to have a faithful and obedi-

ent heart, and the latter the reverse. The books of men's works are first opened, and afterwards the book of life, Rev. xx. 12. Nay, every name is represented as being at first in the book of life, and names are blotted out only for evil deeds; Exod. xxxii. 33; Ps. lxix. 28; Rev. iii. 5. At the same time, it is most true and certain, that every man's destiny is fixed by God's predestination; and, as has been shown, the acknowledgment of this forms part of that faithfulness and obedience, which is the character of the saved. They rejoice to ascribe their salvation to God's free grace in Christ, without the ground-work of any righteousness or strength of theirs; and absolute and irresistible power in all the regions of creation, material and spiritual, is one of His glorious attributes, which the Church will never cease to celebrate. The higher man rises to conformity to God's will, the more will he adopt this language, because he will the more experience its truth,—the reconciliation of his creature freedom with the power of God, being found in its perfect subjection to that power. But this does not bring down God's mysterious and unsearchable working to the sphere of men's understanding, so as to make it a link among their actions and conclusions. It is beneath, around, and within them, but it touches not the integrity of the responsible creature's place. Towards God, whose power this is, we are bound to exercise faith, reverence and fear; but it is not to be made the premises of logical propositions regarding

our own condition, or that of others. Conclusions of this character can be founded, only on the qualities belonging to ourselves, and on the use we make of them.

The views of Predestination and Election in this chapter, have had reference to them as abstract doctrines, in their relation, on the one hand, to the divine supremacy, and on the other, to the responsible place of men ; and they are to be regarded as introductory to the subject of the next chapter, in which their bearing on the actual condition of men in this world will be considered. The principles before explained will, in that chapter, be applied to the practical issues of the Calvinistic theory,—the infallibility of the elect, and the reprobacy of the non-elect, in this life, and the restriction of the blessings of the Atonement to the former class alone, and the absolute exclusion from them, of the latter class.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE ATONEMENT, THE PROBATION OF MEN.

IN this concluding chapter, the points which I shall endeavour to establish, are the following:—

1. That the fallen state is a condition of grace for mankind as a race.

2. That the Calvinistic representation of the infallibility, in this life, of one portion of men, is not well-founded.

3. That the Calvinistic representation of the reprobacy, in this life, of another portion of men, is also erroneous.

4. That faith, though necessarily an act of man by his freewill, is nevertheless the gift of God, and supposes no creature strength.

And, 5. That the Atonement is the probation of men, and, therefore, universal, and not, according to the Calvinistic principle, limited to the elect.

SECTION FIRST.—THE FALLEN STATE A CONDITION OF GRACE.

On the fall, man could no longer rest in the goodness of his natural constitution ; that was defiled by sin, and, both by the act itself, and under the power of the law he had broken, absolutely, and for ever ruined. But it was now his privilege to find forgiveness and acceptance, by renunciation of his natural standing, and by faith in God instead. This condition, and the conferring on man the capacity to stand in the relation to God which it implies, was, in the highest degree, a condition of grace. Man's not passing straitway, body, soul and spirit, into complete and final ruin and death, was grace ; for this was not only included in the penalty of the law, which man had incurred, but, so far as he was concerned, it was the fitting end of the state of spirit, which produced the fall. But God did not so fulfil the sentence, when the fall took place. On the contrary, He preserved man, by grace, in continuous existence, and with power of indefinite increase, in circumstances of external sufficiency, in health and strength of body, and in many good qualities of mind and spirit, according to the image in which he had been created, with capacities for the knowledge of Himself, and for the development of the domestic, social and corporate relations in the world. And, higher than these, all this was confirmed to man as

grace, by express words of peace addressed to him by God. By these the knowledge was conveyed to him, that he was not given up because of his sin, but that his final destiny was still linked with the highest purposes of creation, dependent on his trusting no longer in himself, but in God; whose mercy would give deliverance and salvation, when so trusted in; and whose purpose, according to His words of promise, was to bring in that "seed of the woman," who should "bruise the head of the serpent," and by Him to vindicate and establish the mercy so declared.

Grace under the fallen state thus appeared in a double form; the one, in man's nature and his surrounding circumstances; the other, in God's revelation of Himself in words and acts and outward dispensations, addressed to him, as being under the first form of grace, and accompanied by more grace, to enable him to rise into the higher conditions, into which it was the Divine purpose progressively to carry him. Hence, the history of man assumed a twofold aspect; the one, among those people, who remained under the original grace of the fallen state, with the vestiges of those primitive and rudimentary revelations of Himself, which God gave to the first fathers of men, and influenced also, to some extent, by rays of light derived from the seats of later and fuller revelations;—and the other, among the subjects of those revelations. The trial of both classes will abundantly prove, that, in whatever condition men are placed, so long as they are left to themselves, they will pervert every gift of

God committed to them, be it small or great; and manifest in them the punishment due to their unfaithfulness, overruled by God's grace to bring out higher revelations of His truth and goodness. Every successive dispensation,—the antediluvian, the Noachic, the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, and the Christian,—has exhibited Divine mercy, still raising men into a more elevated place, and men abusing it to make themselves worse than in the previous failures. The progress into darkness of the nations in the natural state, is known from their whole history, and its leading features are depicted in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans. When the evidence of the weakness and untrustfulness of the mere creature is fully completed, the Church looks for an unchangeable condition of stability, under Him who will rule in righteousness, when the redeemed shall possess a purified constitution, the fruit of his purchase; to which condition of things, we may conclude, the present forms an indispensable introduction, in order to reveal to the creatures both God's character and their own.

In order to avoid the discussion of unnecessary questions, I do not mean to advert further to the condition of men in the state of nature. Christians appear to me not to have adequate light for judging of the condition of men in that position, further than, generally, that under the mercy declared to Adam and to Noah, grace came to all men; and that we ought to hold that grace rather confirmed than abro-

gated, by the perfect covenant with Christ—the true ground of all grace, who was manifested, not to take away any blessing, whatever its extent, but to establish all degrees of blessing. How the heathen are placed for receiving blessing on the footing referred to, we are utterly ignorant; and this remains to be estimated in the righteous and merciful judgment of God.

Our ignorance of the destiny of the heathen appears the natural consequence of the supposition, which best explains the Scriptural intimations of man's state in a future and more perfect dispensation,—that men will stand in a threefold series,—of the Church, the Jewish kingdom, and the subject nations. At present, God's revealed action refers only to the first,—the visiting of the Gentiles, “to take out of them a people for His name,” Acts xv. 14. In this dispensation, both Jews and the outcast heathen world are treated as mere materials, whence the Church is to be drawn; but they have in them a farther destiny, which will be revealed when the elect Church (Rom. xi. 25, and Ephes. i. 23,) shall be completed; and to this, the trial of such of them as are not condemned for present rejection of the Lord, may have reference, in ways unknown to us. This inquiry does not concern the present discussion. The history and condition of the heathen establish, how utterly insufficient was the first-mentioned form of the grace vouchsafed to man on the fall, to preserve him from the deepest degradation;

and that the Divine purpose could be accomplished only by means of separate and constant grace, supplied to men directly from God himself, pointing to, and at length consummated in, His direct and personal visitation of men in Christ, for their deliverance.

Neither will this inquiry call for the consideration of the condition of men, after they have been actually engrafted into the Church, in regard to any thing special in that condition, under the promises to the Church, as a body, of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The inquiry relates to the condition of men, standing under the general grace of the fallen state, to whom the preached Word comes, and more especially to the bearing of the Atonement upon them, considered as under moral responsibility.

The condition of grace into which man was admitted on the fall, necessarily pointed towards a perfected state, wherein the Divine purpose should be finally disclosed, and for which that condition was a preparation. Men, in this life, are under a true state of probation, with the view of discovering, whether they will act righteously, by renouncing themselves and the world, and casting themselves on God's grace for salvation, or whether they will act unrighteously, by refusing to do this, and continuing to rest in themselves and the world. The temptation in the garden is nowhere represented in the Scriptures, as man's final, or even as his chief trial. That event, as there recorded, shews us that sin entered the good and pure

creation, through no act of the Creator, but through the weakness and disobedience of man. It opened the way for what is man's chief trial. It took away our creature strength, through death brought upon the first or natural constitution; but it did not leave us helpless in that state. God appeared to man's aid, with His words of mercy, and His revelation of the constitution of man, in "the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world;" for the sake of which that mercy was declared to him, nay, was even expressed in his personal condition, and in his circumstances. Man's final trial then began, and its first subjects were our first parents, who had failed under the previous trial, which they alone underwent.

Hence it will follow, that it is an error to suppose, with the Calvinists, that the sentence of death, which man incurred on the fall, had an applied final sense, in regard to the eternal condition of any individuals of whom the race was to consist, apart from the subsequent trial. The sentence was addressed to faith; that is, to man, as possessed of a moral nature, which rendered him morally responsible to act in faith, in regard to what God might reveal to him of His will, and preserved purposely, to be tried in this way under the sentence which his disobedience had incurred. The sentence had a most important present effective meaning. It brought the first death upon man's original constitution, created and hitherto standing in innate goodness; it entered the vitals of that consti-

tution from the moment of the fall, though the completed sign of it, in the death of the body, was, on account of the grace of the Divine purpose in man, long suspended. It thus required of man, that he should, as it were, die by faith out of all thought of the possibility of being in any way independent of his Creator, of being sustained by any power but His, or of now existing but by His grace; and that, in token of this, he should in faith submit to the literal death of his body, defiled by sin, when God should require it; expressing thereby his sense of the forfeiture of his whole being, body, soul, and spirit, under the righteous judgment he had incurred; but looking upon the death thus submitted to, as the preparation for his receiving, through the provision of God's grace, to be manifested "in due time," a new and glorified nature out of the grave of the first. The sentence also declared to faith the eternal truth, that the creature, actually in disobedience to God's will, is in the state of falsehood and spiritual death, and is exposed to judgment according to this state. These explanations of the sentence of death in Adam, as applied to man in this life, are made in the light at length shed upon it by the death of Christ; upon whom alone, in this present condition of creation, came the bitterness of the sentence, in all senses higher than has been expressed; and by whom came grace to convert death into life, for as many as are obedient. By the power of the grace proceeding from our Lord's

sacrifice for sin, what the sentence farther contained is not applied to any individuals in a final or perfected sense, either as to body or spirit, in this world. The state of grace and probation, into which man, as a race, passed on the fall, excludes the possibility of any such application. Those who believe not are "condemned already," in the sense of having in them a state of mind, which, by condemning itself, will necessitate their condemnation, since it contains the elements, and even the substance, of death, which, if they do not repent, will be developed in the second death—as will be farther explained in the third section. But in the state of grace, they are not suffered to have this condition perfected, because, by the power of the Gospel upon them, they are surrounded by, and are themselves constituted part of, God's ordinances of grace; in relations, and duties, and providences; in the condition of their bodies, and the thoughts and affections of their minds; in the possession of conscience, and the power of freewill; in all which God is, as the God of grace; and all which, if men will continually pervert, still this is but their ever dragging themselves out of life into death; but it falls short of their attainment of death, until their probation in this world shall be ended.

Not only is there a true probation for men in the fallen state, but a probation much more favourable for them, than could have been afforded, had every individual been tried finally as unfallen. The subject is

rendered most complicated to the contemplation, in consequence of the variety of ends required to be served, in order to the full exhibition of the creature's weakness and vanity, contrasted with the Creator's perfection, as indicated in this and the three preceding chapters; and it infinitely surpasses our powers to estimate. The righteous trial of every individual, in the midst of all these complexities, God's character renders certain. But by the trial of men only in an unfallen state, it may well be supposed, that there could never have been stability in creation at all. Man, therefore,—the whole race,—died in Adam, because he was its head, and the truth as to every one was adequately tested in him. Men do not know what they mean, when they complain of this, and ask a similar trial for each individual. The exemplification of God's great truths, is not dependent on the choice of the creatures. It was more merciful on His part, to cause men's trial to turn on their use of His grace in a fallen state. This way of trial supposes, that we are all weakness, and therefore calls on us to make God our strength, and it reveals Him to us, through a Divine Mediator, as forgiving and saving to the uttermost, those who put their trust in Him on this footing. On the other hand, trial in an unfallen state must suppose its subjects to be all strength, and prevent divine help to hinder a fall; for this would be inconsistent with the integrity of the creature's nature.

Supposing, then, that man was subjected to true probation under the fallen state, I shall humbly maintain, that the Atonement, by the death and accepted offering of Christ,—which is, beyond comparison, the highest, and, which is, indeed, the consummating testimony of God's grace to men under that state; the proof of it, to which all other forms are subservient, and which alone gives them power and meaning,—was universal in its character, or, in the words of the 31st Article of the Church of England, was a “perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual.” The Atonement is probation, as well as salvation; and its universality is essential to its having that character, and the admission of this to the right understanding of God's mode of dealing with men under the fallen state.

SECTION SECOND.—EXAMINATION OF THE CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

Without at present enlarging on, or anticipating objections to, the views expressed in last section, I shall bring before the reader the Calvinistic principles on the same subject. In reference to this and the next section, I ask his attention to the following articles, selected from the Westminster Confession of Faith, in connection with the articles relative to “God's Eternal Decree,” quoted in last chapter.

“The Almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission; but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.”
Chap. v. § 4.

“Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory.

“By this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

“They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.

“From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.” Chap. vi. § 1, 2, 3, and 4.

“Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant (of works), the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; whereby he freely offereth unto sinners, life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.” Chap. vii. § 3.

“It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to chuse and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the prophet, priest, and king, the head and saviour of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

“The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of the Father; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him.” Chap. viii. § 1 and 5.

“Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not

able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto." Chap. ix. § 3.

"All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ," &c.

"This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

"Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved," &c. Chap. x. § 1, 2, and 4.

"They whom God hath accepted in His beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

"This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own freewill, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ;

the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof. Chap. xvii. § 1 and 2.

“The most wise, righteous and gracious God, doth oftentimes leave for a season His own children to manifold temptations, and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, and to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption, and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.” Chap. v. § 5.

The prominent feature of the system, whose principles, in reference to the points under consideration, are expressed distinctly in the articles before quoted, is, that no such thing as the *probation* of men under the fallen state takes place. The condition of the non-elect is doubly foreclosed; *first*, in the eternal decree of election, and, *secondly*, in the fall of man in Adam; by the latter of which there is declared to have been realized in man's nature, as a race, that condition of reprobacy, which, as to the non-elect, was involved in the decree to eternal death, and which, by their birth, remains, unchanged and unchangeable, in the definite persons included in that decree. The destiny of the elect is set forth as also

fixed and unchangeable for salvation, by virtue of the decree of election, the means for fulfilling it being alike certain of application, and irresistible in effect. Probation, in the proper sense of the word, is out of the question, in such a state of things. What the events of this life discover, is, merely, the defined individuals, called to certain salvation out of the indiscriminate mass, all lying in moral death and impotency by constitution. The non-elect are represented as devils, under a temporary respite of punishment; the elect, as saints in an earthly purgatory.

The errors in this system appear to spring from two sources:—the one, the confusion between the place of the Creator and that of the creature, which was adverted to at length in the last chapter; the other, a mistaken view of the manner, in which the fall affected man's moral constitution. These I propose to examine separately, in this and the following section.

The remarks in the former chapter on the first of these points, in its bearing on the Calvinistic doctrine of Election, equally apply to the Calvinistic doctrine as to the condition of the elect in this world, which is termed the Final Perseverance of the Saints. The subject of the former doctrine,—the defined appointment of individuals for salvation and for death,—and that of the latter,—the certain fulfilment by the elect in their lives of the conditions of salvation,—are alike truths in the Incomprehensible. To say, therefore,

that Final Perseverance, according to the will of God in the Incomprehensible, may be averred of defined individuals in this world, is to pass into God's place, and to judge from thence concerning the salvation of those individuals;—that is, according to the erroneous principle pointed out in last chapter, to arrive at the fact from the Incomprehensible, whereas we can arrive at the Incomprehensible only from the fact, when it shall be actually realized in men. Ignorance, on our part, of the individuals, as to whom the ascription of Final Perseverance is made, does not obviate the objection, because the Incomprehensible does not depend on our mere unacquaintance with what God has done, or will do, but supposes His action still confined to His own place of Deity, with which the creature cannot, and knows not how to intermeddle. Further, as the doctrine avers Perseverance as being certain in the definite elect, it implies that they must, in this life, have immutable wills as creatures. As, however, the articles quoted from chapter 17th of the Westminster Confession, are guardedly expressed, so as to exclude this consequence, I shall examine their grounds, with the view of shewing, that the consequence is inevitable, and that the exclusion is inconsistent with the doctrine itself.

The substance of the doctrine is, that the defined individuals of the elect cannot finally fall away from grace, but shall certainly persevere therein, and be saved; but that this perseverance does not depend

upon their own freewill, but upon the immutability of the decree of their election unto salvation in Christ. I would ask,—if the perseverance of the elect can be affirmed by us on earth to be certain, how is it possible that it does not depend on their freewill? Can it be accomplished against their freewill, or without it, or separately from it? Is not the freewill essential to the perseverance, the means, nay, the very seat of it? If the freewill perseveres, do not its possessors persevere? and if it does not, do they not fall away?

Perhaps it will be answered, that the perseverance of the elect depends not upon their own strength, but on the grace of God in them, in which alone they trust. No doubt, the case necessarily supposes this state of mind. We are not considering those, who are resting on the strength of nature, and who, by so doing, are wickedly using their freewill to rest on what is corrupt, and to refuse the only true rest. The subject is the faithful, who are trusting in God. But their faithfulness is not the less by their freewill. True, they trust not in, but renounce themselves; but it is by their freewill they do so: true, they acknowledge God to be their only strength; but this is their act by their freewill.

A simple illustration will render the point of the question clear. Suppose that one was to deny, that a stone in his hand owed its qualities of cohesiveness and hardness to its being a stone, and to allege that,

instead of this, it derived them from the secret creative and sustaining Divine will ; the assertion, in the sense of a contradiction, would be untrue, or at least absurd ; for, both according to common practice and just thought, the fact of a substance being of a particular sort, is the reason for ascribing to it the qualities belonging to that sort. If it was explained, that what was meant, was, that the Creator alone is the cause of the properties of His works, this would be so far from being at variance with the ascription of the cohesiveness and hardness of the substance to its being a stone, that this fact is the mode, in which the Divine will has realized these qualities in creation, in this particular instance. Unquestionably, the Divine power is the sole ground and sustainer of all creatures, and of their qualities ; and, of course, the Divine operation in man is far higher in kind, than that whereby particular qualities are conferred on, and sustained in inanimate things ; for man is a creature of a far higher order than such things. But all this is immaterial to the point at issue. God's operation in man does not overthrow his substantive creature being as man. There is no mingling of the two natures, or of their acts. The acts of man's freewill are acts of his creature being, in whatever circumstances. In this respect, the qualities of an inanimate substance, and of man, are not at all in a different position, and the cases are so far identical. Consequently, it is not permissible to deny the operation

of man's freewill in his perseverance, in order to do honour to the grace of God in it.

The perseverance of the saints, then, if the doctrine is well-founded, does depend upon their freewill, since freewill is the creature quality, by which it is, and without which it cannot be effected. If, therefore, the elect *must* persevere, as the Confession maintains, and as is necessarily implied in the Calvinistic doctrine of election, they can do so only through the *immutability* of their freewill. And yet the Confession expressly denies immutability to man's freewill, in the present state. How, then, can certain perseverance be asserted of a will, which is in itself mutable? If, on the other hand, it were said, contrary to the Confession, that the Divine operation does really communicate immutability to the will, then how can this be reconciled with the fact, that no man has the consciousness of any such thing; that the contrary is in this life the subject of constant experience, and of constant confession, and most of all by those most exercised in their consciences before God; and that the Scriptures ascribe no such quality to any man, but the very contrary?

We are thus brought to the point already indicated, that the Calvinistic doctrine of Perseverance is an application to the elect of the Divine attribute of Immutability, corresponding to what we have seen Election to be, in reference to the Divine Supreme Disposing power. The doctrine of Perseverance

brings this truth out of the Incomprehensible into man's being; notwithstanding, like Election, it cannot be manifested in the mere creature upon earth, until after the judgment. If it were realized in the elect now, it must be matter of certain consciousness, and it would enter into the exercise of present faith, or, rather, it would transform faith into the perfect life of Divine charity. Hence, every man, who set himself to serve God, and to be accepted of Him, since he could do so only on the footing of being one of the elect, would be warranted and bound to persuade himself, that the Divine grace of immutable perseverance had been communicated to his will, and that perfect Divine life was realized in him,—an extravagance of persuasion, I believe, not without example in the Christian body, and on this very ground. The Calvinistic doctrine escapes from this consequence, only by the distinction taken between the operation of the freewill of man and the Divine act of election,—a distinction, I conceive, which cannot be maintained, if the grace of perseverance attaches to the creature being of the elect in the present world.

The Calvinistic doctrine, which represents the absolute working of Deity as conferring on the elect an unchangeable character in their earthly condition, would thus, if pressed to its true principle, question the reality of the creature's place, and resolve into the extravagance of scepticism. It would be an error, resting upon the same ground, as that of those men-

tioned in the last chapter, who deny moral responsibility. But creature responsibility and creature fallibility are alike inseparable from man in this life, because he has a true creature standing of grace for probation, though in moral imperfection and weakness. Adam's unfallen state of goodness was a reality, and was subject to true creature probation, notwithstanding, in the Incomprehensible, it involved a fall into a state of corruption, and afterwards two following states of unknown character, one of them unchangeable, both differing from the two first. Why, in like manner, may not the earthly condition of those who shall be saved, be the true creature condition of imperfection, grace, mutability, and probation, to which, therefore, it would be a contradiction in terms to ascribe certain perseverance, notwithstanding it is, in the Incomprehensible, involved, that their condition shall, with absolute certainty, emerge into eternal glory?

It is most true, that the elect will persevere, and be certainly saved, through God's grace upon them. But the elect have not the ground of this in them in a completed constitutional sense; and it is their knowledge and unceasing confession, that this is their condition, which forms, in part, the means of their being certainly preserved, and the power to make which truly and not in pretence, is given them, by Divine grace, for this end. Since, therefore, this power is not in the elect in this life, it ought not to form part of the con-

fession of the faith of the Church ; for to say, that it pertains to them in the sense in question, by being theirs in the Incomprehensible, would be to use words without meaning. That God has a seed, who shall serve Him, every one of them known to Him, who shall conquer all their enemies, and infallibly come to everlasting life ;—all this is as certain, as that He has manifested Himself in man's nature, by His eternal Son, as the Christ. But these truths exist as yet only for faith, hope, confidence, and rejoicing towards God, who will accomplish it all ; and to take such convictions of faith, and to draw conclusions from them, regarding man's actual condition in this world, according to the rules of logic, it has been mentioned, inevitably expresses what has no reality. When Paul said of himself,—“I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, after having preached the gospel to others, I myself should be a castaway,”—he described the actual condition, in which he and every other elect person is in this world, of being in himself subject to temptation and change, and under a true danger of being lost from unfaithfulness.

SECTION THIRD.—EXAMINATION OF THE CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE, OF THE REPROBACY OF THE NON-ELECT IN THIS LIFE.

I proceed to the second source of error in the Calvinistic system, relative to the state of man in this

world,—the mistaken representation which it gives, of the manner in which the fall affected man's moral constitution.

The law,—“in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,”—in regard to the denunciation, was, when uttered, a prophetic word, a truth still uninterpreted; and it could receive interpretation, only as the fact, and further revelation, should open it. The sentence, when incurred, was a word of large import. It embraced in Adam all men, from the first to the latest generation; for, from the first sin of Adam, the corrupt condition of man's nature, and all future sin, proceeded; and that sin, both by its virtual and inevitable power on the race through its root, and from its being the example and representation therein of all future sin, in its essential character of departure from God, was the fountain of the whole subsequent development in man of the sentence of death. The sentence, according to its ultimate meaning, comprehended many consequences,—the corruption of nature, the diseases and miseries of this life, the death of the body, and the eternal death of body and soul. Were these consequences, then, realized in Adam and the race, from the moment of the fall? Was it the meaning of the sentence, that it should be so? It is vain to determine these questions, by partial and *a priori* notions of the meaning of the law. God's revelations and acts towards men alone could interpret it. We know, that, in point of fact, all the consequences be-

fore mentioned did not attach to any part of mankind at once. The race has come into being in many successive generations ; some of the consequences came only by degrees ; the two last were long suspended ; the second last did not happen to Enoch and Elijah, and will not happen to the translated saints ; nor will the last happen to the faithful who obey the gospel of Christ. Shall we say, that this gradual and incomplete fulfilment of the sentence taken literally, has arisen from any change or revocation of it ? This it is not lawful to say as to God's Word. The actual fulfilment of the sentence is His interpretation of it ;—His revelation in fact of the incomprehensible purpose, which He had in it from the beginning.

In the unfallen state, man rested on his nature, and not on God. He exercised towards God, not faith, but rather generous sentiments of honour and gratitude. The goodness of his nature, and its essential character of innate power and freedom, must have precluded any other feeling. In this condition, man was, in a certain sense, independent of God,—a state short of the highest form of perfection for a creature, but unavoidable in an unfallen creature, and innocent. When man's nature was ruined by his breach of obedience, it was unlawful for him to rest on it any longer. The feeling of self-trust, or independence, which was natural to his constitution, unavoidable and innocent before, then became the assertion of a sinful condition of being, both because of its being attached to what

was itself corrupt, and because of its implying the rejection of the grace of God. We saw, in the first section of this chapter, that God, in his administration of the sentence of death incurred by man, gave Himself, on the fall, to be trusted in, instead of man's own destroyed nature, and that, by this grace, He converted the sentence of death into the means of ultimate life, to as many as should be right-hearted and obedient. Hence, after the fall, man's resting on himself was in itself necessarily sinful,—the constituted habit of sin, the continuation of Adam's state of mind, the state of rebellion and moral death ;—while the rejection of this state, by obedience to the truth, manifested by God's grace in the conscience of every man, and by trusting in Him, was life, through the righteousness of faith. Every child of Adam by natural descent, was inevitably born into this corrupt state ; wherein, however, divine power was present, for giving him the experience of partial, and the hope of perfect, deliverance from its corruption, if he would commit himself to it, with the grace of true optional ability of will to do so, by casting himself on God.

The Calvinistic system sets forth, that man by the fall is “utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil,” and that he “hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation ;”—and that God, “by the covenant of grace, freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them

faith in Him, that they may be saved ; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them able and willing to believe." Thus, it represents God as offering the non-elect what He had ordained they should never have ; and requiring them to believe the offer, though, in consequence of the fall of Adam, and the want of the gift of the Spirit, they are constitutionally unable to do so ; and the 7th article on Election declares, that He is pleased, " for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice," the class of men referred to.

In examining this doctrine, I rest nothing on the point of justice towards men, in the procedure it sets forth ; for it is a vain imagination, arising from entire ignorance of our position, to suppose, that we shall arrive at any truth regarding God's ways or our own state, by appearing as claimants for justice at His hands. It is in the position of suppliants for grace, that we shall learn His ways, including his perfect justice. Our safety, as well as duty, lies only in our casting ourselves unreservedly on God, as He is revealed in Christ, as the God of righteousness, truth and mercy ; for to know Him as such, is salvation.

In this point of view, it is impossible to receive the foregoing representation of God's ways towards men, because it contradicts the first principles of the moral nature He has given us, and would reveal Him to

His creatures as a God of unrighteousness. To ascribe the effects before mentioned to Adam's headship, violates the dictates both of reason and of conscience. Large effects must be ascribed to headship, because it is a primary principle for the manifestation of unity; but not such as totally overthrow the equally real, and the antagonistic, principles in humanity, of individuality and personal responsibility. Every man, by the gift of God, has individuality and personal responsibility in himself towards Him; which, therefore, must be free from such effects of headship, as are asserted by the Calvinistic system. The fact, that this place has been conferred on individual men by the Creator, makes it certain, that its integrity will be guarded by him,—that is, as to essentials; for, from the constitution of humanity with these opposing principles in it, the practical working of them requires mutual compromise, wherein both will be recognised. The bringing of all men, in Adam, into the fallen state, it has been shewn, infers no overthrow of the latter principle. The object of the 18th chapter of Ezekiel is to confirm and proclaim this essential ground of truth,—“What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, as also the soul of the son, is mine: the

soul that sinneth, it shall die." The principle so announced, which is illustrated throughout the chapter by supposed examples, is contradictory of the Calvinistic doctrine; which thus asserts as true in the universal race, what God solemnly repudiates as the mode of His dealing in Israel.

The Calvinistic system, it appears to me, owes much of what is objectionable in it,—in regard to man's relation both to Adam and to Christ,—to losing sight of the truth,—that every man has true personality and responsibility, by the gift of God. Dr Candlish, in the Preliminary Dissertation in his work on the Atonement, makes imputation turn on this very point. He says, (p. 15),—"It implies these two things; *first*, That a vicarious headship be constituted in one person; and, *secondly*, That the whole result or consequence of the trial, upon which that one person is placed, whether it be success or failure, be actually and in fact communicated and conveyed to all whom he represents." That this language is meant to express the Calvinistic foreclosure of the personal responsibility of many by the act of one, will appear in section fifth, in which I propose to notice some of the leading principles of the work referred to.

That this is an error as to Adam, I have already submitted; and I humbly consider it equally so as to Christ. Our Lord, in assuming our nature, did not take into His Person the personality of the individuals of the race, or of any one of them. On the contrary,

He is the witness, in His own personality as the Christ, of the truth of the Father towards men, for their trial, under the personality that belongs to each individual. Such texts as these,—“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;” “Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me;” “Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up;” “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;” “I have manifested thy name unto the men, which Thou gavest me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me;” “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son,”—shew, that personality in men, wherein lies the power of a man to give himself to Christ, is essentially of the Father. This quality must have proof made of it; and this is done, not by superseding responsibility, and the creature’s place, but, on the contrary, by recognising and trying these by the preaching of the Gospel of God’s grace to all. When men righteously respond to it, they manifest that, of the Father’s will, the Spirit of the Son is in them, and they pass, by God’s gift, under His headship, for forgiveness, acceptance, and the full blessings of the Holy Spirit, given to Him without measure, and administered by Him. When they wickedly reject it, then are they His for judgment, because of their iniquity and falsehood; for “the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son,”—as will be ex-

plained more fully in the concluding section. If the personal responsibility of men were foreclosed by headship, it would follow, under the doctrine of Romans v. 12-19,—in which the parallel between Adam and Christ is put in broad terms,—that Christ, who, “when He was lifted up, drew all men unto Him,” had secured universal salvation. Supposing Romans, v. 12, to mean, according to the Calvinistic view, that realized and concluded spiritual death passed upon all men, regarded as in the present life, because of their being under Adam’s headship, then, under the opposite side of the antithesis, in the following verses, and especially verse 18th, it should be held, that universal restoration was secured by the faithfulness of the Second Adam, the true Head of mankind. This is a matter, however, which properly belongs to the fifth section, in which I hope to be able to shew, that the passage is attended with no difficulty, if men are recognised as possessing the separate gift of individual personality and responsibility, not foreclosed in the person either of Adam or of Christ, but inalienably individual. I proceed with the examination of the Calvinistic doctrine.

I have mentioned, in the first section, the grounds in point of fact, on which it appears that the course of the Divine Providence towards man is irreconcilable with the Calvinistic theory; and which show that man was preserved, in order to undergo a true trial in this life, and had provided for him the means necessary

for it. Far from the sentence incurred on the fall having been executed in such a way, as to deprive men of the power to exercise moral freedom, God's grace, on that event, established in men that power, and called on them to exercise it in the highest and most responsible way; for now the duty is placed before us, of turning away from ourselves and all earthly things, as defiled and corrupt, and of trusting in God, as, in all respects, our only and direct Saviour and Preserver. We have, in the fallen state, this option put to us, as having, by God's grace, reason, conscience, and freewill, capable of appreciating the moral obligation involved in it, and of determining and acting independently and responsibly. Grievous as is the burden which lies on men's consciences and spiritual powers, through sin and the world's ways, —and I would be far from undervaluing its vastness, —God's grace both sustains us, internally, in the condition before-mentioned, and gives us, besides, on every hand, inducements and helps to chuse aright. Instead of men being closed up, by God's decree, in the power of the sentence on the fall, to determined disobedience and perfected corruption of powers in this life, all His dealings with man in the fallen state, —both outwardly, by word and expressed intention, and *in* man, in his being, condition, and circumstances; —our bodily and mental state and experiences; our whole relations and duties, with the acts and feelings to which they are rightly fitted to give rise, either to-

wards us, or on our part; every good thought, and every opportunity for a good deed; all stirrings of conscience and convictions of sin, and all impressions of truth on the heart; all openings of affection, in the exercise or experience of fatherly and friendly defence and care, and all recognition of God by the same; every thing we esteem redeeming and consoling in the circumstances of our lives; the abundant testimonies of God's word, ordinances, and providence, that all blessings and hopes come from and point to Him; and, not least, the experience and sight of manifold afflictions, chastisements and desolations in our human condition, in order to show us, that there is ineffaceable evil in ourselves and this state, and to lead us to lay hold on God's promises; the whole world, in which we dwell, so richly stored for man's instruction and comfort; the domestic, social and corporate institutions, by which provision is made for his defence and development; the proclaimed principles of God's dealings with nations, whereby He brings home to all men, that the righteous will be blessed, and the unrighteous punished; and, besides, what includes all these, and at the same time is infinitely higher than they all, every thing comprehended in the work of Christ towards us, and in our nature;—all this is God's protest, as it were, *in our very being*, against the assertion, that any man is constitutionally closed up to pervert all these things, and against any man living in the corrupted state of

mind, which is inevitable, when he trusts in himself and his nature, instead of in God.

There is a plain distinction between the spirit of the fall, and the condition of the fall. The former is rebellion by man against his God; the latter is the state, into which the whole race of man was brought, in consequence of the sin of Adam. The former is the condition of death; the latter, that of grace. The former, "which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," being essentially false and wicked, is necessarily without rest, or peace, or hope; the latter is the state, in which "the righteousness of faith" is done by the children of obedience, as well as the opposite, by the children of disobedience.

The Calvinistic system, which confounds the condition of the fall with the spirit of the fall, through the error already adverted to, of bringing the Divine absolute and still unmanifested purpose into real operation in this life, sustains this view by the authority of those passages of Scripture, which describe the working of the carnal heart under the spirit of the fall. The passages referred to express the character of the heart, that departs from God, or refuses to return to Him; that cleaves to self-will and defiled nature, or the things of nature; that will not depend on God, but will rest in self, and be independent; in short, the spirit of the act, which produced the fall,—the creature displacing God, and serving himself instead. They show what man is, according to mere

nature,—according to the deeds of the law,—in his own strength,—the state in which law takes him, when it is addressed to him, and tries him. It then appears, that man, disjoined from the Source of Life, and living for himself, is in falsehood and corruption, and that nothing but what is wicked and abominable can flow from him.

Take, as giving an example, and the sum, of all such passages, the quotations from the Psalms and Prophets, in Romans iii. 10-18, by which the apostle describes the characters of the natural man. Those descriptions were not applied by him to any particular class of men ; much less did they describe the state, to which any particular class were tied by unchangeable constitution. They shew what every Jew was,—Moses, Samuel, David, and Paul himself, as well as all others,—when tried by the law,—that is, when he stood on his corrupt independence, wherein the law of holiness searched him ; in order “ that *every mouth* may be stopped, and *all the world* may become guilty before God.” And to what end ? The apostle proceeds to show, that it is in order to drive men out of so dreadful a predicament, into faith, whereby we are “ justified freely by God’s grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” That representation of the apostle, which he directs to all, in order to lead them to salvation, and which proves salvation to those, who give heed to it, and

are obedient, cannot be taken as a description of the constituted state of a part of those so addressed.

The spirit of Ephes. ii. 3, in which the apostle reminds that Church, that "they were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," is exactly the same. All men are by their birth children of wrath. The Ephesians are expressly said to have been so. Like the Colossians, (i. 21,) they had been "some-time alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works." They had ceased to have this character, by becoming obedient to the faith of Christ. The "others" referred to, might, of course, equally enjoy this blessing, through the same means. Thus, the passage does not infer an unchangeably constituted state of sin.

The first transaction recorded in Scripture after the fall, appears to have been intended to show, as in the most concentrated form, the true character of man's heart, according to nature, in consequence of that event. Cain, the type of the wicked, (1 John iii. 12), about to exhibit the working of the evil heart of self-will, refusing subjection to God, is dealt with by Him in person, in reference to the state of mind, which resulted in his putting his brother to death. "The Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him;" Gen.

iv. 6, 7. Are these such words, as could have been addressed to one, bound over by an irresistible law of his constitution to commit the act which followed?

God said to the Jews, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" Ezekiel xxxiii. 11. Paul (Rom. ii. 4,) says to a man, considered as a wilful transgressor,—“Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” Paul said even to heathen, whose condition places in so strong a light the downward tendency of man, that God had indeed “in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; nevertheless He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with joy and gladness;” Acts xiv. 16, 17. And, in still stronger terms, he tells other heathen, that the object of God’s dealings with men, was, “that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring;” and that the times of ignorance “God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent; because He hath ap-

pointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead;" Acts xvii. 27, 30, 31. Are these modes of referring to men, and multitudes of like passages, explainable upon the Calvinistic views of the decree of reprobation, and of the unchangeable effects of the fall in a definite class in this life?

The state of grace, into which man passed on the fall, receives its interpretation, and discloses its end, only in the light of the atonement of Christ; a subject, which still remains for consideration. In this place, I shall only observe, that we can apprehend clearly by the gospel, that the sentence of death, incurred by the whole race of man in Adam, receives its fulfilment both in mercy and judgment,—the declared principles of God's revelation of Himself to man. It brings the first death, literally or virtually, upon all, as to the original constitution of man, destroyed through sin; but, as to all further consequences, it shows men, in this life, as a universal truth, the execution of the sentence, in all the severity required by it for the utter abolition of that constitution, fulfilled against the Person of Christ, who alone bore the burden, and who alone could do so, as an atonement for sin. Hence, faithful men, bowing to the death of their first nature, and having faith in the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, to make the sentence to

them rather of life than of death, can confess to their having no standing whatever in themselves before God, and see their forgiveness and acceptance, and their admission to new life, only in the death and resurrection of Christ. But the sentence still cleaves to those, who have refused to renounce the old man, "crucified with Christ," and have lived in its strength, resting in the corrupt and false independence of nature, and refusing submission to God. On such must come "the second death," the power of the sentence on those, who had grace to crucify "the old man" with Christ, but did it not; and, in the doom of such, the sentence receives its final accomplishment. Thus, the sentence,—the one word, which embraced, in Adam, the whole race as one,—receives its fulfilment in all, in mercy first, and then in judgment. The Calvinistic doctrine applies the sentence to the non-elect, with judgment unmitigated and, indeed, incredible,—without mercy.

It follows, from what I have submitted in this and the preceding section, that it is a solecism to speak of the elect and the non-elect in the Calvinistic sense, as terms applicable to men in this world, viewed as responsible and under probation, and the subjects of present regard and duty. As a fact yet unmanifested, destined to emerge in creation, for providing an object, whereon will rest the boundless complacency, which God will shed forth, through that One-beloved in

Christ, upon His redeemed works, His election ought never to be suffered to be out of our minds ; just as that eternal state itself should never be. In this relation, the election is a term full of definite and most pregnant meaning, and may be fitly used ; as when our Lord said, “ for the elect’s sake these days shall be shortened ;” and its subjects will be exclusively referred to, as often as reference is made to the opening of God’s incomprehensible purpose ; as when our Lord prayed—“ not for the world, but for those whom Thou hast given me ;” and the Church, following His example,—“ that thou wilt shortly accomplish the number of thine elect.” But the revealed and only appreciable election in Christ in this world,—for grace, privileges, hopes, and responsibility, on the one hand, and for duty, honour, charity, and care, on the other ; which are the points of view, in which the Church has chiefly to do with her children,—includes all the baptized. The term is almost invariably used in this sense by the apostles. We are called to election, by the word of the gospel ; we are embraced by its blessings, when we are baptized into Christ ; and, accordingly, the Church indiscriminately are termed the elect, in the Epistles. The whole Church is, in this life, the representative to us of the true Election. Those who are condemned in the judgment, will fall from Election, as truly as from grace, and all baptismal privileges, and will be rejected from the true

Vine, not as plants never joined to it, but as fruitless branches cut off from it.

SECTION FOURTH.—THE EXERCISE OF FAITH, BY MEANS OF FREEWILL, INFERS NO CREATURE STRENGTH.

The three principles,—1. The absolute divine supremacy; 2. The incomprehensibility of the divine existence and action; and, 3. The reality of the creature place,—must enter into every accurate system of religious truth. In the last chapter, and in the second and third sections of the present, it appeared, that the Calvinistic system sacrifices the second and third of these principles to the first. On the other hand, the Pelagian heresy, and the Arminian system, so far as it points this way, sacrifice, more or less, the first and second to the third. We can recognise the co-existence, and the harmonious co-operation of these principles, only by faith,—that is, by the exercise of true spiritual life, in the fear of God; according to what was explained in the fifth chapter. It is, I conceive, from converting the truths of faith, which govern the question, into relations of the understanding, that confusion arises as to the place which the powers of the creature have in the work of salvation.

There are two ways in which we may contemplate deliverance from evil,—the one, in which the active co-operation of those delivered is essential to deliver-

ance; the other, in which they are the passive receivers of a benefit from or through another. Although examples from earthly events are inadequate to express the spiritual truth of the redemption, from their being inherently both superficial and partial, yet, as they have the advantage of rendering distinct, what cannot be easily made so by an abstract statement, I shall avail myself of this mode of illustration.

Suppose that the inmates of a house on fire are assembled in a part of it, from which escape is impossible, except along a passage, which the flames have just reached. A devoted fireman penetrates to the place where they are. He throws a plank across part of the flooring of the passage already burnt away; he hastily excludes the flames by some temporary expedient; and then he proceeds to guide the objects of his efforts to the way of escape, which the advancing flames will suffer to be available only for a few minutes. Some of them boldly venture with him, and are saved; the rest, deterred by the apparent danger, refuse to leave the spot, which the act of their deliverer renders still secure; and they remain, and perish. This is deliverance by means, the success of which requires the active co-operation of those delivered.

But, suppose that one is liable to pay a large debt, without means to do so; that he is in continual apprehension of having his person seized, and his whole property sold, for payment of it; and that a friend, taking pity on his misery, generously pays

the debt, and presents him with a full discharge. This is deliverance by means, which require no co-operation on the part of the man who is benefited. He is the passive receiver of a benefit, provided wholly at the cost and by the pains of another.

The reconciliation of the three principles mentioned at the outset, depends upon the just application to man's condition of these two modes of deliverance, as being both, at one and the same time, indispensable to his salvation.

Our salvation by Christ, in reference to its operation in us, is after the mode of deliverance expressed by the former of these cases. It delivers us from "the old man," the corrupt nature, wherein we stand of ourselves, and it brings us into the new man, wherein we have acceptance and peace. There is, as was mentioned in chapter sixth, no such thing as forgiveness of sin, viewed as an active principle; it would be self contradiction on God's part to suppose so; for sin is the denial of Himself. The carnal nature, or our life in the first Adam, whose action it is, "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" it is hopelessly corrupt. Escape is made, not by its being converted and forgiven, but by our being dead to it, through our being engrafted into Christ crucified; by the faith of which condition, it is slain, and a new life by the Spirit, having totally different properties, comes to us. It is a vain supposition, that man's natural standing is partly

good, and that the death of our Lord makes it in any way safe or tolerable for us. His death is its highest condemnation. In itself, it has the original sentence to eternal death, hanging over it, nay, existing in it. It is only in the new life of faith and obedience given us in Christ, that we receive forgiveness, through the atonement, both on account of our communion, as to the flesh, with the fallen condition, and for our past sins therein, and also for the shortcomings and transgressions, into which we are still tempted, through that communion, and which we repent of and confess. Into the state in which forgiveness reaches us, we cannot come but through our own active co-operation. The possibility of our so doing, and the means, are provided by another, but we ourselves alone can use them, and our refusal will render them vain.

But, at the same time, the mode of deliverance, by the interposition of another, without any active intervention on the side of the party benefited, lies at the root of all that was done, for the accomplishment of man's salvation. "We are bought with a price." "While we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We must ever recognise this, as what God has done for us in Christ, and has proclaimed in the world by Christ's manifested and accepted sacrifice; and acknowledge, that the power, by which the grace of receiving it has come to us, is that of the Holy Spirit alone, and that, as is

said in the 10th article of the Church of England, we can do no good works, "without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, that we may have that good will." All this must be our hearty and most unreserved confession, else we know not our standing as redeemed fallen creatures.

What we thus acknowledge, is all a matter of faith. We cannot, as was shown in the last chapter, convert our faith in the Divine incomprehensible operation, into a cause, accounting, by its presence, for the faith of those who believe, and by its absence, for the want of faith in those who do not, without confounding together the places of the Creator and of the creature, and overthrowing the reality of that of the latter. In other words, we cannot, by the understanding, connect the first of the modes of deliverance before mentioned, with the second, as its cause. This impossibility appears from the necessity of taking two distinct cases, of inconsistent characters, in order to bring out the whole features of what is meant to be explained. Take the first case only, and the representation is imperfect. There is imminent danger; and there is help from a source, separate from the persons exposed to it;—but the Pelagian will admit all this;—it is necessary to express, in addition, the utter impotency, in themselves, of the persons exposed to danger, yet in combination with the fact, that the actual exertion, by which safety is at-

tained, is by means of powers in them. No supposed case can rightly show this part of the truth, because it exists in God's incomprehensible action. What corresponds to it, in the case referred to, is the possession of the internal resolution and confidence, the firm nerves, and the bodily powers of motion, through which the means of reaching a place of safety are laid hold of. But these the individuals saved feel to be in themselves; and it is only by a reflex act of faith, that they can ascribe them to Divine grace.

In the real case, men, being in the state corresponding to the way of deliverance first mentioned, which is their proper creature state in Christ for action, do therein, by faith, recognise and rest in the truth of what is represented by the latter way of deliverance, as being certain in God for producing this blessed result. The acts of the Creator and of the creature are both real, in their own places. Hence, our knowledge of the source of grace in the deliverance, which God has provided for us in Christ, is not separable from the faith, by which we recognise and rest in that deliverance; at least, it is worthless, just in proportion as it is separated from it. The knowledge is, on this account, all the more real. It is the truest and profoundest of all knowledge,—the irresistible confession of our highest powers, in their only just exercise. But it presupposes the existence and the exercise of the faith, as the channel through which, under Divine grace, we attain the knowledge; and

its form is that of revealing to us, not a cause, but an incomprehensible operation.

It is admitted on all hands, that the act of will, whereby a man turns to God, different as it is in motive and end, does not consciously differ, in its essential character, as the exertion of a power in us, from any other act of will. The highest Calvinist admits, nay, in order to meet the Arminian view, that God's grace operates merely by way of moral suasion, he earnestly and justly contends, that the Divine energy of the Holy Spirit works in the will, as the man's will, as well as upon, or externally to it. The error of viewing the work of the Spirit as objective, along with the work of Christ, instead of holding it merely subjective, is well pointed out in the second chapter of the treatise of Dr Candlish (p. 31.) It is to be regretted, that this author has not reconciled with these sentiments, his sweeping exclusion (at p. 25) of "the individual will of fallen man, with its supposed freedom, power, and ability of choice," in the work of salvation,—an exclusion, I grant, most necessary, if the will could be regarded only in the Pelagian sense, but which becomes manifestly inapplicable, and, indeed, self-contradictory, in reference to the action of the will, under a work of the Spirit merely subjective, though absolute in its extent and character.

There are, however, many other acts of the heart, in the return to God by faith, besides that of naked

will :—there are fear, love, godly sorrow, self-renunciation, and others. But all these are involved in, or necessarily accompany, an act of the will returning to God, though, it may be, with different degrees of distinctness, at different stages of the act. These right convictions occur together, because a right act of the will is an act of the whole man, and, when exercised towards godly repentance, it unlocks all the springs of grace, which God in Christ causes to flow from man's heart. "Whoso cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

The question as to man's act in yielding to, or resisting, Divine grace, must, therefore, be treated, on the admission, on all hands, of reason, conscience and freewill, as the effective powers in him for reflection and action. If an unrepentant man, under the grace of the Gospel, is liable to condemnation, is it not because he abuses these? If a man repents under this grace, is it not because he uses them rightly? So necessary is it, thus to recognise the reality of man's creature powers, that the propositions as to the will's action in regard to repentance, will resolve into the following ;—that the will of fallen man, by itself, or in its own strength, (which truly means, that the man is not renouncing himself, and casting himself on God, but that he is rejecting His grace, and resting on his own strength,) will ever, in its self-determining, inscrutable action, refuse obedience to God ; but that,

by the power of Divine grace, (which truly means, that he is renouncing himself, and casting himself in faith on God for deliverance), it will, in its self-determining, inscrutable action, ever give Him obedience. In both cases alike, the action is by the will's self-determining, inscrutable power. This is a fundamental principle. Conscience, nay even personal identity, require, that this place be conceded to the will, in the action of the man. The result proves in both cases, whether the man's will, when tried by the Gospel under the grace of the fallen state, is righteous or wicked. For this end, we can go no farther back than his will; it would be inconsistent with his personality and responsibility, were we to do so. This, nevertheless, is the means, by which the Holy Spirit forms the image of Christ in those who believe; because it can be done only by bringing out the features of perfect and unconstrained humanity, which was created on purpose that it might be thus used for the revelation of God.

It is at this point, that a difficulty is felt by many; whence they are apt to conclude, that the freedom of man's standing is inevitably overborne by the higher claims of the Divine supremacy. They do not see, how men's trial can consist in the proof of the uprightness of their hearts, under universal grace, conferring on all the knowledge of good and evil, and of the will of God for their salvation, with true optional power of will on their part for decision, without the

consequences, that this must constitute them their own saviours, to some extent at least, in their own strength, and place salvation under a law of works, instead of mere grace. They think that the operation of the Divine Spirit, in moving to repentance, can have no substantial existence, unless it has bestowed on the converted, powers of a different character from those of the unconverted, and that the Divine supremacy cannot reveal itself through the free actions of the creatures, under a common grace; and they conclude, with the maintainers of moral necessity, that man must be bound down by a physical law, or moved by an impulse tantamount to such a law, to the pre-ordained end, or else be independent of his Creator.

I shall consider, first, this state of mind itself, and, then, the operation of grace on men's spirits, to which it has reference.

It appears to me, that the state of mind before described, far from providing grounds for establishing God's sovereignty, and for fortifying faith towards Him, is, on the contrary, in much danger of overlooking His place, and superseding faith, as the principle of reliance on Divine action; and of resting on fixed physical arrangements, or cognizable powers, whose character of operation is quite different from that of God. It holds the power of God, which ought to be conceived of, while all-prevailing, as altogether apart from the creatures, to be in this aspect shadowy and

inappreciable ; and it must have His control rendered substantial, by means of what our minds can recognise, as an operation having a constraining effect in or upon the very nature of the creatures. Fully conceding, that God works in His creatures by means of the powers he confers and sustains in them, I submit, that reliance on the powers is the opposite of faith, and a way of viewing the work of the Spirit as objective. What truly is demanded, under the guise of the rejection of creature powers, and of respect to Divine power only, is a power having the character of a physical law, in place of divine incomprehensible action. But the Scriptures are very clear, in connecting true faith with the latter only. “ Through faith we understand that the worlds (*αιῶνας*, the ages or dispensations) were framed by the Word of God, *so that* (*εἰς*, to the effect that) things which are seen were not made of things which do appear ;” Heb. xi. 3. “ By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark ;” *ib.* 7. Abraham, in whom was exhibited the type of the essence of faith, “ *against* hope believed in hope,”—“ he considered not his own body *now dead*, nor yet the *deadness* of Sarah’s womb ;”—“ but was strong in faith, giving glory to God ; and being fully persuaded, that what He had promised He was able also to perform ;” Rom. iv. 18, 20-1. The apostle treats the hope that comes by faith, and an effect realized in the creature’s condition, as absolute contraries,—“ We

are saved by hope ; but hope that is seen is not hope ; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it ;” Rom. viii. 24-5. In the operation of grace in men, God does every thing, yet He does nothing ; and man does nothing, yet he does every thing : God’s Being, the only efficient, does not, in any degree, mingle itself with that of man ; man’s being, in itself all sin and weakness, is by God’s grace made strong for faith and righteousness:—such is the paradox of faith. The state of mind in question tries to escape from this essential character of faith, by substituting for trust in genuine divine action, the certainty arising from an operation, which impresses in the subject powers or tendencies of necessary effect in producing the contemplated end ; in other words, by substituting for the operation of the free, though, in themselves, impotent powers of man under grace, a supernatural law producing an infallible result. It is perplexed and unsatisfied with an incomprehensible operation ; although this is so much among the elements of God’s ways towards men, as to have been denominated by our Lord, in His conversation with Nicodemus, “ earthly things,” and represented as an indispensable preliminary to farther divine knowledge. It is a state of mind akin to that indicated by Nicodemus’ question,—“ Can a man enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born ?” But our Lord said, “ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou

hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell, whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”—“ If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things ?” John iii. 3-12.

But, while the supposition of the infallible operation of realized laws would infer, not merely that man has no creature strength, but that he has no creature standing, it is necessary to inquire, whether it is possible to dispense with this supposition, and yet combine true probation by the trial of uprightness, with the certain fact, that man has no creature strength, and that God is the sole author of life and salvation to him. The reconciliation of these opposites is a wonderful instance of the divine wisdom, with which man's redemption teems, in all its aspects.

The reconciliation is accomplished, by the condition of man in the fallen state, being, as was pointed in the last section, wholly that of grace, as his actual constitution. The fall,—a universal fact to every man's consciousness, when honestly dealt with,—in combination with his experienced state, brings home to his heart and conscience, even by its own evidence, but especially under the preaching of the Gospel, both of the truths,—that he has forfeited his original standing before God, and therefore is void of natural strength ; and yet that he is sustained under grace, for duty towards God. There is no occasion for propositions of the intellect, as preliminary to a man's knowledge,

that this is his condition. His conscious position embodies this truth, and of itself forms one great part of his capability for probation, prepared by God as indispensable for the preaching of the Gospel; his constituted condition in this life being, of its own nature, that of grace under sin, as really as that of unfallen Adam was that of goodness. Grace, in this sense, it will have been remarked, does not mean divine acts towards men individually, in which they are passive, but active powers in mankind, given and sustained by grace, (in the true sense of that term, as distinguished from creative goodness,) as their proper ground, with a sphere for their exercise,—a true creature life of grace for probation.

The operation of this form of life, is the opposite of that of life in the unfallen state. In the latter, man relied on his creature constitution, and its powers; and faith was absent from it. Hence, the sense,—if not of merit,—at least of goodness and self-sufficiency, was inseparable from it: self-renunciation was alien from its character. But, in the life of grace, the inherent sense of sin in men's consciences, with the testimony of God's mercy, when His word, or other evidence of it, comes to them, makes self-renunciation the necessary form of their action for good, in its very first step, and self-reliance, the necessary form of their action for evil. Thus, the only possible righteous action, in the life of grace, must, to the conscience, embody as an inherent property of it, the acknow-

ledgment of the two truths before mentioned,—in other words, exercise faith by grace;—and its unrighteous action deny them,—in other words, reject faith and grace. And so, the life of grace simply calls on men to choose between God and themselves; and gives them the free powers of creatures for doing so. Men by this means are tried, in the fallen state, by the proof of their uprightness of heart; yet without the possibility of creature merit, or creature strength, on the part of those who are faithful; for where is creature merit or strength in the exercise of faith, when the denial of strength, and the confession of sin and weakness, the renunciation of self, and trust in God alone in Christ, are its essential character and ground?

The elements of capability of trial in this way, are, I submit, for the reasons given in the preceding sections, in mankind generally in the fallen state. Its universality but the more certainly proves the largeness of the grace of God, without in the least detracting from its reality and exclusive character. There was a basis laid, and nothing more,—but yet the real basis, by the operation of the Divine Spirit, on which all future grace was built. As this, on the one hand, was a real and indispensable part of Divine grace in man, so, on the other, the consummation of God's purpose, for the salvation of men, and the revelation of His glory by them, could not be effected, without His direct acts in our nature by Christ, and

the full and perfect operation of the Holy Spirit, in subordination to it; for the sake of which, and, indeed, as a part of it, the first mentioned form of grace came into the world from the first.

We thus see combined in man's condition under the fall, the elements,—that his freewill remains the distinguishing quality of his nature,—that, though his nature is defiled and ruined, and he is under a sentence of death, his human powers, suitable to this condition, are sustained by grace for the probationary end of this life,—that, by this means, the purpose of God is developed in regard to individual men, by the trial of their uprightness, under the grace which He reveals to them,—and, yet, that this trial necessarily implies, that men have no strength of their own, but receive strength only from God. Hence, the man, who casts himself on God's mercy, confessing his utter unworthiness, does so only by the grace of God, and is thereby brought into the way, according to his faith and obedience in the Church of Christ, of having fuller and fuller measures of that grace manifested in him, by the power of the Divine Spirit. The man, who refuses to do this, and holds to his own strength, discovers by experience the miserable end of this false condition. The results will be according to perfect righteousness in regard to men; and, at the same time, they will fulfil the eternal purpose of God;—in exact accordance with the true relation of the creature's

place to that of the Creator, as explained in chapter fifth.

Hence it appears, that the difficulty of the mind, in the state before described, from the supposed self-righteousness involved in a trial of man's uprightness of heart, is obviated, without the overthrow of man's nature, on the one hand, and without the apprehended consequence, on the other. The difficulty truly arises, from the solution being looked for, not according to the relation of spiritual natures, but according to the manner of the operation of physical powers on the same level;—not by the trial, whether men are true or false, under the grace of the supreme and incomprehensible God; but by satisfying the demand of the understanding for impulses operating infallibly on dead or impotent subjects, after a manner of operation irreconcilable with Divine action, and subversive of man's creature being.

The important matter in this inquiry is,—what is the state of a man's own spirit towards God, in the knowledge of His grace?—Is he renouncing himself because of sin? Is he believing God's word of grace in Christ for salvation? Is he praying for the power of the Holy Spirit, and for the extinction of the will of the natural man, in order that His blessed operations may not be hindered? Is he willing to subject, and, as it were, educate his spirit, according to such views of his own vanity, and of the Creator's supremacy and grace, as are expressed in the passage of

Scripture, commented on in last chapter, at p. 105-6 ? And is he acting in the Church and in the world, in conformity with his faith ? These are questions of life ; what they refer to are *acts* of life. To take the truths, which such a state of mind,—or the Scriptures describing such a state,—implies, as to the impotency of the creature, and the sole-sufficiency of the Creator, and express them in a system after the manner of the understanding, is quite apart from the substance of the matter. This may be done by a man, either as to his own state, or that of others, without his having true spiritual life in himself, or knowing what such life is in others,—just as is so well explained by Dr Candlish (p. 15.), in regard to the most exact intellectual knowledge of the bearings of Election or of the Atonement. I do not question, that it may, for certain ends, be, to some extent, unavoidable, so to express the doctrines of religion ; for systems, embodied in language, must assume an intellectual form, on account of the nature of language, as mentioned in the fourth chapter. But this must be so guarded, as constantly to suggest the spiritual reality, and thus prevent our imaginations from being misled from the truth, by impressions derived from the essentially different character of the operation of natural powers ; else the action of true spiritual life will have substituted for it the imaginary conception of an objective work of the Spirit, to the great injury of the Church. The mere system, as so expressed, is nothing in itself.

What concerns us, is the spiritual state of the minds of men.

The state of mind, the examination of which has given rise to the foregoing observations, rests on the Calvinistic views of the elect and of the non-elect in this life, adverted to in the two preceding sections. It supposes, as man's constituted state under the fall, literal and remediless impotence, on the one hand, and an irresistible external power to give life, on the other; that is, the denial of a state of general grace, or, rather, the denial of true creature being in fallen man in this life. But persons in the supposed state of mind would do well to consider these questions:—When man, by the act of disobedience, became justly liable to eternal condemnation, was the realization of this consequence warded off by any thing but God's grace, which, on the fall, began to reign in the human condition; and, if not, did not this bring him into a condition *wholly* of grace? Is not the universal grace of the fallen state, the necessary foundation of all preaching? Is not a creature condition of true probation, on the footing of mere grace, *possible* for all men? If it is possible, is it not plain from the Scriptures, that this is man's condition? Does not such a condition negative the supposition, that divine grace operates as a cause in the human constitution, appreciable by the understanding? And, if it acts only in the Incomprehensible, how can its operation be known, otherwise than in the manner of probation,—that is,

a true and not a fictitious probation,—by the trial of men's uprightness of heart,—through faith, unto salvation,—and the rejection of it, unto condemnation for falsehood? A due consideration of these questions ought, I humbly think, to infer the conclusions,—that the free exercise of a man's reason, conscience and will, by which he renounces himself, and casts himself on God for salvation, supposes no creature strength, and, on the contrary, is the only form, in which the refusal of such a claim can be expressed.

In reference to the self-determination of the will of man in the fallen state, as explained in the third chapter, it is important that it be observed, that the only mode of its righteous action being by self-renunciation, and faith towards God, this saves it from the imputation of self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness.

What tends to mislead us, so as to cause us to judge, that while one class of men repent, because they have grace from God, the rest do not, because grace is withheld, is, that we compare men's actual state, not with the amount of light they have in their consciences at the time, but with a measure of obedience, such as will come up to a standard in our mind of what a converted man should do, and such as we judge they could not give, without a degree of strength they plainly have not, or perhaps ever had. This way of judgment affords no just idea of the reality of men's grace and trial. It has been already shewn, that the first thing required of men in repentance, (and the

same, indeed, must form the basis of the Christian character at all stages), is not ability to do active external works of faith, but is willingness to confess to God sin and a defiled conscience, to be weak and powerless before Him, and to cast themselves on Him, as their only strength. Motions in this direction, with convictions of their truth, all men have, more or less. Honest yielding to such convictions, though, it may be, they are too obscure for external observation, will certainly bring more light and strength from God; while resistance to them, from preference of some corrupt earthly end, condemns men, and may at length lead to their becoming hardened and indifferent.

Another misleading circumstance is, the unequivocal and absolute confession of every man who fears God, that he owes his condition wholly to His grace, and not to any strength of his own; for men are not usually accurate observers of the mode of operation of their minds and spirits.

Farther, the sovereignty of God's will, in dealing with men as He pleases, from which we think we see, and probably do see, very different measures of patience, and warning, and other forms of grace, in His dealings towards individuals, to bring them to repentance, obscures to our view the fact, that all men have real grace.

And, finally, the paradox between the Creator's place and that of the creature, already so largely insisted on, which embraces in it the certain truth, that

God does, in His incomprehensible place, appoint the destiny of all men, with all the means appertaining thereto,—a truth, the hearty admission of which, as has been shewn, is itself one of the tests of a righteous state of will, and which involves no infringement of the creature's place, and yet, according to the judgment of the understanding, seems to do so,—gives occasion to our resting most on the sovereign disposal by the Creator of His creatures, and hence to our doubting or denying the reality of the place of the creatures. This bias is increased by the mode of answer, which not only, in a gracious sense, the man of faith gives to himself, when he thinks of his own state as wholly of the mercy of God, but which is, and which must be, given to a froward mind, in a froward sense, when it takes on it the wicked and presumptuous place of questioning its responsibility on this ground; as in Rom. ix. 19, a passage adverted to above, at p. 93.

There appears reason to conclude, from the grounds before set forth, that the question, which has been so much contested between the Calvinists and the Arminians,—whether the grace of the Holy Spirit for conversion is resistible or not,—is on both sides unreal in its basis. It assumes, that the will of man, and the operation of God, are two powers contending on the same level. The consequences inevitably are, that, in the one view, the creature place is overthrown by the Divine power, and that, in the other, the crea-

ture is recognised as, in some degree, independent of it. The fixed and eternal purpose of God as to all creatures cannot but be accomplished; but it will be accomplished, as to men, through their free ordering of their ways, by means of true and sufficient creature powers for responsible action under His grace. To deny the consistency of these opposites, and demand the reconciliation of them, in a form agreeable to the apprehension of our understanding, is to abandon faith, and the place of creatures, and vainly to suppose ourselves in God's incomprehensible place, or to assume some other, whence we may behold and judge both God's action and that of man.

The reader, who duly considers the principles of this question, will have no difficulty in seeing the perfect agreement of what has been said, with the apostle's emphatic words,—“By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast;” Ephes. ii. 8, 9. The apostle is here expressing the testimony of his own faith, for the reception of the faith of the Church. He is not describing a quasi-mechanical process on God's part towards man's mind. He absolutely negatives the claim to any strength, derived from man's natural constitution. All man can do is by grace, through God's free gift. Consequently, faith is a gift from God. According to the Confession of Faith, every power we have is a gift from the same source,—“Every good and every perfect

gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights; James i. 17. Faith is preeminently God's gift, because it is the forming in us, who by nature have it not, of the mind of the Christ, the Second Adam, as to that quality, by which he is specially distinguished from the first Adam; and because its own essential character is to cause the man to renounce self, and to ascribe all grace and salvation to God only. The state of grace, and the preached gospel, and God's Spirit in both, are the gift given; obedience of faith, including submission to Christ in His Church, for adding to faith the farther grace that comes by His sacraments and ordinances, is the gift received; disobedience is the gift rejected. Every thing else as to this matter is in the Incomprehensible; which leaves the creature place in perfect integrity, nay forms its just and indispensable probation in that condition.

The reflective reader can have no difficulty in judging, that unsound doctrine consists, not in the use of the powers, without the exercise of which no doctrine, either sound or unsound, can be held, but of unsound doctrine held by the exercise of those powers. The error, against which the Calvinistic system has justly protested, is that of ascribing a certain amount of remaining goodness to the original constitution of man's nature in Adam; so that, to some extent, grace was not necessary for restoration from the effects of the fall, and man need not deny himself wholly by faith; and, consequently, so that the sacrifice of

Christ is not to be regarded as the crucifying of the old man, and as a sacrifice for sin, in the strict sense, but as the means of our having our imperfect actions in our own strength indulgently dealt with, and of bringing us helps and encouragements. What is here maintained is the contrary of all this; and supposes that the first constitution, and its strength, are condemned and wholly abolished through sin, and must be wholly renounced, as being crucified with Christ, and that our salvation is entirely by God's grace in Him.

I cannot conclude this section, without expressing, how inadequately any exposition of the case,—taken, as the subject requires, from a position, as it were, on the confines between the natural and the renewed man, between the death of living for self, though still with grace for deliverance, and of life through the renouncing of that state, and returning to God in Christ,—gives of the fulness of the Divine operation in those who, by faith, give themselves up to obedience to God's grace ministered in His Church, which the Scriptures express by “being born again,” and “being created anew.” But the truth cannot be appreciated, unless examined in its elements. Let it be remembered, that we are dealing with a true paradox,—the creature place encircled by, and contained in that of the Creator, yet real and substantive. To the understanding, if suffered to have the initiative in judging of it, the matter cannot but prove altogether inconceivable. To faith in the spirit, it is not so, but, on

the contrary, it is the perfect reconciliation, through the Saviour, of man with God, for answering all the need and all the desires of man, and for declaring all the glory of God. The object of these observations has been, to withdraw the matter from the sphere of the understanding, and to subject it to the contemplation of faith; whereby we see, that the condition of the disobedient is the wilful rejection of grace, and that the condition of the obedient is life and peace by the same grace. A due consideration of God's Being, as Infinite and Incomprehensible, ought, I conceive, to remove all difficulty from this conclusion.

It is necessary to recognise the existence of grace in all men, adapted to their constitution, as that of having freewill and a moral nature for probation, not only for the ends of establishing their true responsibility, and of making clear the Divine righteousness in bringing them into judgment, but in order to vindicate God's work in man, as the creature made in His image, for revealing Him in creation. The end seems a laudable one, of subjecting man to an overruling moral necessity in his very constitution, when, otherwise, as Edwards and Chalmers appear to have supposed, he would be emancipated from the control of a superior. But if this is an erroneous conclusion, the supposed mode of control destroys the perfection of the constitution, to which so high a function in the Divine purpose belongs. We ought not to think, that the Divine purpose stopped short of the most elevated

form of being, in the heads of a creation to be made worthy of its end, for fear of their having too lofty a place in regard to its Author; especially since the union of the Eternal Son to their nature, and the power of the Holy Spirit in the redeemed in Him, give a pledge, both of the highest perfection, and of the most sure faithfulness and stability.

Nevertheless, while the condition of rightly standing by faith as a redeemed man, is the centre point between the errors, of necessity and fatalism, on the one hand, and of subjection to imagination and feeling, on the other, I earnestly remind the reader, that that condition, from its very freedom and independence of action, is in danger of falling back into the self-relying strength of the natural man. It seems the special object of Romans vi. to point out this danger, by warning the Church against the abuse of free grace. The paradox, which, as was explained in chapter fifth, our creature place presents to our minds, in relation to the all-comprehensive place of God, can be solved only by the absolute submission of the creature will to the Divine; in the faith, that our creature place has, because of sin, no standing in itself, but is by grace derived from, yea, is inspired by God Himself in Christ. Let it never be forgot, that there is but one way, in which our absolute submission to God can be expressed,—that of our embracing the cross of Christ, the obedience of the will to God in Christ even unto death, through the con-

fession, in His strength, of the utter corruption of the natural man, and the receiving, through that confession, of new life from Him. It is the co-existence in redeemed man of these opposite principles, for which the apostle Paul so frequently strives to find utterance, by such forms of contrasted consciousness as these :—

“ I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me ;” Gal. ii. 20.

“ After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God ;” Gal. iv. 9. “ I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus ;” Phil. iii. 12. “ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure ;” Phil. ii. 12, 13.

SECTION FIFTH.—THE ATONEMENT THE PROBATION OF MEN, AND THEREFORE NOT LIMITED BUT UNIVERSAL.

It follows from the true probation of men in this life, that the Atonement is its consummation. As God's grace is men's trial, the Atonement, the highest act of grace, that on account of which all others were given, and that which interprets them all, is especially their trial. In it, men see the reason, why God spared the race on the fall, gave them grace in so many forms, internal and external, and followed them with

longsuffering during so many ages. By it, at the close, He exhibits the life of His Son, in our nature, taken away, as a sacrifice for its sins, and Him raised again for our justification; in order that in Christ we all may have faith, that "our old man," the original corrupt nature derived from Adam, is "crucified with him;" that, being by faith dead with him, we may have newness of life derived from him, the Second Adam; and that in him we may have free access to the Father, our sins being forgiven, our hearts renewed, and ourselves accepted as His children. This is the final interpretation of the grace, of which men were the subjects from the first. Into this state all men are, by the preached gospel, called upon and commanded to enter, and have grace so to do, if they will. The atonement is necessarily for all men, therefore, as much as the grace was, that went before it.

That such is the character of the atonement, follows from the great truth, for which Calvinism powerfully, though inaccurately, witnesses,—that all men died in Adam. This truth lies at the bottom of all God's dealings with man, and of His plan in man for the revelation of Himself. Adam's sin was the sin of the race; it tainted all; it is imputed to all; it brought death to all. All future actual sin in all men, though done under the separate responsibility of the committers, was but the development in detail, of what was involved in that one act of the head of the race, in departing in heart from God, by disobedience to

His commandment. The sentence, therefore, necessarily embraced all men, as one. But the power of the sentence, according to God's meaning in it, came upon men, as we have seen, not in the absolute sense in which we would interpret its letter, but through the medium of an intervening grace; and this, as seen fully interpreted in the sacrifice of Christ, reached in all men the root of the evil, in order, if possible, to destroy it; for Christ was manifested as the Second Adam, the sacrifice for the common sin, "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world."

Mankind is one in God's sight. It was one in the first Adam. It is one in the Second Adam. There is but one human nature; to this our Lord joined Himself; and this He redeemed. What he offered for us, by His spotless sacrifice, was man's nature in its unity. He bore the sins of that nature, though himself without sin, through His having adopted it, and therein undertaken the burden. From that nature, as represented in His Person, the Father hid his face. "Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin;" Rom. vi. 6. He "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness;" 1 Pet. ii. 24. Our Lord, through bearing the sin of the common nature, bore that of all men. He could not possibly bear a part only; for to say so, would infer the denial of the ground of the death of the race

in Adam. He could not bear the sins of any selected class of men, or even of any one man, without bearing the sin of the common nature. The sins cannot be regarded separately from the nature; for according to sound doctrine, which is expressed nowhere more strongly than in Calvinistic Confessions, the nature is itself the root, whence the sins spring. If our Lord did not bear the sin of the nature, therefore, he could not be said to bear the sins of men at all. Hence, it was inevitable, that the nature itself, according to the constitution of the first Adam, must die, in order that a new constitution, out of the grave of the former, might be received by us, through the death and resurrection of Christ; as is distinctly set forth in Rom. vi. 1-12.

The two cardinal points of the Incarnation are, that our Lord assumed the genuine nature of man, and that therein He was without sin. Unless the former was true,—besides the evident inconsistency with Scripture, as well as reality,—He could not have taken the character of the Head of the race, the Second Adam, and therein assumed, and borne, its burden. As to the latter, the words of the law,—“he that doeth them shall live in them,”—(words very expressly set forth in Scripture, and represented by Paul as descriptive of inherent righteousness,—see Lev. xviii. 5; Ezekiel xx. 11, 13 and 21; Nehem. ix. 29; Rom. x. 5; and Gal. iii. 12.)—were evidently written, (there being no vain words in Scripture), in order to

be applicable to Christ, and to Christ alone. So clear was He in our flesh by God's law, so pure the sacrifice from its very rudiments, that there was no necessity of death upon Him, other than that of His own righteous obedience to the will of the Father, for the accomplishment of the salvation of men. Hence, he said, "No man (no one) taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again;" John x. 18. His free act of self-sacrifice by obedience, was typified in that of the Hebrew servant, (stated in Exodus xxi. 2-6, and applied to Christ in Ps. xl. 6, and Heb. x. 5), who, because he loved his master, his wife and his children, should refuse to go out free alone, and consent to be bound a servant for ever. This part it was possible for our Lord to take, because, having truly assumed "the flesh and blood of the children," He was able, of His own will, freely to pass into any part of the experience of that nature, how abject soever, that was consistent with His perfect goodness. Hence, His confession, in our nature, of our sins, and His bearing the burden of them, for the destruction, in His Person, of "the body of sin," was not only compatible with His righteousness, but was its crown and perfection. By this act of obedience even unto death, He opened the way for the salvation of all, who should believe in the reality in what He had done for them, and take hold on it, and thus be brought by Him, in

His Church, unto “the newness of life” by the Spirit, promised to all such.

The grace of the atonement, therefore, in this life, is, that it proclaims to all men to whom the gospel comes, that, in God’s sight, their “old man” is put away; that they are no longer bound up in the unity of the first Adam,—a constitution condemned, and to be held as destroyed;—but that they are called and commanded to obey the truth, by renouncing that constitution, and coming into the unity of man in the Second Adam, and to stand therein. Grace to give a responsible answer to this call, in the knowledge of its righteousness, is the ground of the probation of men; and the gift of this grace, with the sacrifice to which it relates, is the witness of the love of the Father to all. The trial of the judgment will be to discover,—who are in the unity of man in the Saviour, the Second Adam, the Supplanter of the elder, and the purchaser of the race by his death;—and who have wickedly refused to come into this unity. For this end,—there being no judgment in this life,—“as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive,” 1 Cor. xv. 22. The condemned will be shut out from the blessing, and from all place and name in the one race of man, not because they were not purchased into the Second Adam, but through falsehood on their part; because, being purchased into the Second Adam, they are found to be of the first, through their wilful rejection of the truth of God; and they

are therefore cast out, as useless branches, to be burned. "This is the witness which God hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son;" 1 John v. 9-11. Thus it is, that just judgment will come on the impenitent and unbelieving, and that, at this final opening of God's unsearchable purpose, according to His invariable way among His works, His Election will fulfil itself in righteousness.

In confirmation of the principle, that God deals with men, both in Adam and in Christ, in the unity of the common nature, (which is not at all at variance with the fact, that both reward and punishment will be proportioned to individual conduct,) it may be noticed, that no man can learn perfectly, except through the medium of this truth, the character of the natural man in himself, and the consequent justice of its condemnation, and necessity of his utterly renouncing it. A man's individual sins are undoubtedly the burden that first oppresses him, and they form the key to the knowledge by him of his relation to all sin. But no man was ever thus taught the whole truth concerning his nature, or could thus learn, that the description in Rom. iii. 10-18, applies fully to himself. Our community of nature in Adam, and, through that

community, the death of Christ, as much for each, as for all of us, are needed to bring home to us this truth. We ought hence to make every instance of crime and wickedness that comes to our knowledge, the occasion of personal application; and we should consider the confession of the universal sins of men, and especially of the Church, necessary for the cleansing of our consciences, as well as that of the sins committed by us personally.

The Calvinistic limitation of the Atonement to the Elect, is necessarily derived from the Calvinistic doctrines, as to election, and as to the effects of the fall; and it brings out the practical evil of these doctrines in a strong light. If, as these doctrines assert, a certain portion of men are under a Divine decree of moral corruption, unchangeably realized in them, an atonement applicable to such persons cannot be supposed. The reasons before stated against the doctrines referred to, will, if well founded, be equally effectual against the conclusion deduced from them.

It will be useful, however, to advert more particularly to the terms in which the limitation is sometimes vindicated,—that if our Lord bore the sins of all men, then the sins of the finally condemned will be twice borne; and that it is a contradiction to suppose, that God could intend that His Son should bear the sins of any, who are not actually saved.

In one view, these sentiments are founded on the supposition, that our Lord's sufferings are to be taken

as an exact counterpart and equivalent, in intensity and amount, for those which His redeemed people must have borne, but for His intervention. This idea is irreconcilable with the facts attending our Lord's sufferings, and founded on no intelligible ground, either of Scripture or reason. Dr Candlish, in his work before referred to, repudiates the notion, "as dishonouring to God, and savouring of a carnal mind." The references to the intentions of God in the act of atonement, require more detailed notice.

To say, that if Christ bore all the sins of the old nature, all men in that nature must be saved, else the penalty will be twice borne, is an instance of misapplied logic, arising from a deception of the understanding. It is derived from the contemplation, in an intellectual form, of the latter of the two ways of deliverance, mentioned at the beginning of the last section, apart from the former. But sin is not a mere dead load of calculable debt or obligation, capable of being obliterated and removed by considerations apart from its own character; it is the state of mind of moral and spiritual beings, possessed of a common nature, to whose mode of action it is attached, and wherein they have individual personality and responsibility. The idea now combated leaves out of view, that these qualities belong to every man by the gift of God, and that His purpose is the revelation of Himself, in all His attributes, among such creatures. It has been shown, that our Lord could not bear the

sins even of one man, without bearing the sins of the whole nature ; while yet He did not adopt into His personality, the personality of any man or men whatever. In these circumstances, what is there to hinder, that God, having ordained Christ as an atonement “to take away the sins of the world,” should use this fact for the trial of men, by means of the individual responsibility, which belongs to every man, and make this the ground, through His own grace, for bringing out His sons, “which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God?” This end necessarily requires, that the sacrifice of Christ be presented to men, as His atonement of all sin, except that of the final rejection of Himself, for which “there remaineth no more sacrifice;” Heb. x. 26. Is there anything impossible or inconceivable, or otherwise than wise and just, in the supposition of such an application of a universal atonement? Can it be questioned on any grounds, but such as mistake the nature of sin, and overlook the true character of man’s constitution? Is not this the way, in which, in point of fact, the result is accomplished? Does it not make the ways of God in the world wholly the revelation of His righteousness; and can we conceive any other mode, in which the revelation of His character, in this respect, could have been effected? In all these points of view, the atonement becomes the means of revealing God’s righteousness, by being the ground of the redemption of the faith-

ful, and of the condemnation of the impenitent ; and it thus, literally, in the fullest sense, and after a double form, will “take away the sins of the world ;”—in mercy first, if men will receive it ; but, if not, then, necessarily, in judgment against the rebellious.

The objection to the universality of the atonement, on the ground of God’s intentions as to those who are to be saved, arises from His Infinity and Incomprehensibility being passed over. The Divine essence is a *plenum*, a fulness, of all goodness, mercy, truth and righteousness. It is this, which is revealed in Christ to the intelligent and moral creatures, for their probation, whether they will be obedient to the Source of life and blessing, or whether they will chuse the world and their own ways instead ; and it is this revelation, which will vindicate the eternal judgment. The death of Christ is the expression of this Divine character, in the midst of the world ; as is admitted by Dr Candlish, as to all men, in a passage to be afterwards quoted. But how can it be said to be so, unless it expresses an atonement for all men ? If it is an atonement only for a part of men, it must be merely our ignorance of those for whom it is not, that can lead us to suppose, that it is the revelation of the graciousness of the Divine character towards them, or otherwise than the reverse, in the most emphatic sense. If it be said, that it is inconsistent to suppose, that any atonement could be set forth for those, who, according to the Divine incomprehensible pur-

pose, will be finally condemned, this is to forget the necessary place of limitation belonging to creatures, which makes unavoidable a succession of dealings with them, before the fulness of the revelation to them of the Divine character can be accomplished. The objection involves a principle, equally inconsistent with the reality of the probation of Adam in the original state of innocence, and of all grace in other forms to men ever since, and, indeed, of the reality of creation at all,—the principle of holding, that the incomprehensible and unmanifested will of God, existing in the immensity of His being, overrules, and renders unreal, His present ways to His creatures, in the fulness of His gracious character, and according to their actual condition.

Another form of the objection, that the atonement, if universal, will have been for some persons who were already dead in impenitence,—overlooks the largeness of the act, as the revelation of eternal love, manifested “in due time,” in the earth, but pre-ordained before the foundation of the world, the true interpretation and foundation of the grace and mercy that have come to men, at all times, and in whatever form, and the footing, accordingly, on which all men will be judged at the judgment-seat of Christ. It, besides, contemplates the sin, for which, necessarily, there is, and can be, no sacrifice at all.

It may, on the other hand, be objected against what has been urged above, as to the universality of the

atonement, that the atonement, as so represented, is truly of no value to those not saved, but the reverse ; since their condemnation will be but aggravated by the sacrifice, which Christ has rendered for them in vain. I answer, that a universal atonement gives truth and reality to man's condition in this life, and to his probation on this footing ; that it reveals God's grace to all to the uttermost for their salvation, if they will receive it ; and that it will vindicate the righteous judgment, to which He will bring the world. Calvinists are jealous for the power of God, but He Himself is more jealous for His honour ; and, by the atonement as before represented, it humbly appears to me, that all His power is preserved, together with all His honour. These are ends, not to be depreciated by reference to results as to the numbers of those actually saved. As to those who remain disobedient, and die in that condition, the atonement has presented to them the fullest blessing, of which an atonement is capable, in reference to a state of probation under grace in a fallen state. The atonement is, in itself, the very same to them, in this life, as to the faithful. It is the expression of God's real and highest love to them ; it secures for them the present suspension of judgment for sins, through their non-imputation, 2 Cor. v. 19, which is virtually their forgiveness for the probationary end of this life ; and it provides for them the enjoyment of the state of grace, as to their whole being and circumstances, with

free access to salvation. It is true, that such as have not the fear of God in them, remain, all the while, "in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity." But why? Is it because the grace of the atonement does not rest on them? Is it because God has not, for its sake, given them faculties to know, and act on, the difference between falsehood and truth? or that He does not command them, as their Lord, and intreat them, as their Father, to return to Him? Is it because any thing whatever stands in the way of their being forgiven, and blessed, in His House? The affirmative cannot be answered as to any of these particulars. The only difference in this life, between the two classes, as to the atonement, is, that the one receives it, and finds it the entrance to God's favour and peace; while the other, so long as it rejects it, necessarily, by its own act, shuts itself out into the blindness, hopelessness, and deception of the present life.

The inconsistency into which the Calvinistic system inevitably carries minds, even the most in earnest for the deliverance of men by the gospel, which was illustrated in the Introduction by the case of Dr Chalmers, may be also illustrated from the work of Dr Candlish already mentioned. The doctor treats the subject so as *all but* to admit the true probation of men; indeed, much of what he says can hardly be understood, but on the footing of this being their ac-

tual condition ;—for pastors having the views in question, are, when faithfully declaring the gospel, constantly found contradicting, in their hearts and spirits, the doctrinal conclusions, by which their understandings are held bound. He comes short of the full admission, only by force of the error I have endeavoured to point out,—the tacit assumption, that the divine will in the Incomprehensible destroys the reality of the will of man.

The first chapter begins with the affirmance of the Calvinistic doctrine, in the most uncompromising terms,—“The question being,—was the death of Christ, or his work of obedience unto death, considered in the light of a satisfaction rendered to divine justice, and an atonement made for human guilt, undertaken and accomplished for any but the elect? We answer, without qualification or reserve, in the negative. They for whom Christ died are infallibly saved.” Exactly correspondent is the following (p. 7):—“All may be said to be bought by him (Christ), inasmuch as, by his humiliation, obedience and death, he has obtained, as by purchase, a right over all,—he has got all under his power. But it is for very different purposes and ends. The reprobate are his to be judged; the elect are his to be saved. As to the former, it is no ransom or redemption, fairly so called. He has won them,—bought them, if you will,—but it is that he may so dispose of them, as to glorify the retributive righteousness of God in their con-

demnation ; aggravated, as that condemnation must be, by their rejection of Himself. This is no propitiation, in any sense at all,—no offering of Himself to bear their sins,—no bringing in of a perfect righteousness on their account ; but an office or function, which he has obtained for himself by the same work,” &c.

Overagainst such passages, and in contrast with them, are such as this (p. 8):—“The cross of Christ is the proof and measure of that infinite compassion, which dwells in the bosom of God towards each and all of the lost race of Adam, and his infinite willingness, or rather longing and yearning desire, to receive each and all of them again into His favour. Even the cross itself would almost seem to be an inadequate expression,—though a blessed confirmation, of what is in his heart ; of the feeling, so to speak, to which he gives utterance by an oath, when he swears : ‘As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth ;’ and of the deep ineffable sincerity of his assurance, that he would rather,—how much rather!—that the sinner should turn unto him, and live.” And again, (p. 12.) “On the subject of the universality of the gospel offer or call, and its sincerity or good faith on the part of God, as well as its sufficiency as regards men,” one of the observations is this, “To vindicate God in this procedure, and satisfy men, it is enough, that these two things be acknowledged and established,—*first*, His right to

command and require the sinner's return to Himself; and, *secondly* His willingness and ability, in consistency with the ends of justice, to save all such as do return."

Here we have, on the one hand, the non-elect represented as reprobates, given over into Christ's hands from the first, solely and exclusively for the judgment of the retributive righteousness of God in their condemnation, without any atonement, in any sense, to cover from God's eye, even for the ends of forbearance and mercy, their completed alienation of heart and incapacity for good, sealed in them by his decree as realized and unchangeable. And, on the other hand, we have it said, that it is enough to vindicate God, and satisfy men, that he has a right to command *such* sinners to return, and is *willing* and *able* to save such as do return; nay, farther, that the cross itself is almost an inadequate expression—(the object of this qualification I do not understand, unless it may bear upon the Calvinistic point now under consideration,)—of God's infinite willingness and longing desire, that *such* sinners should return to him, and live. How can these sentiments be reconciled, even upon the principles of common reason; much more, in consistency with the revelation of God, as the God of righteousness and truth? Dr Candlish attempts the reconciliation in a passage, a considerable part of which I shall transcribe, and by which, as it brings together into one view the two contradictory elements of the

separate passages already quoted, it is not difficult to discover the cause of the error that exists in them.

After an illustration from the supposed case of a man, whose undoubted benevolence of heart has its mode of exercise affected by his opinions on the subject of pauperism, with the view of founding a distinction between the will of the "heart" and of the "mind," the doctor proceeds,—“So is it with God; His will, as determining what, in every case, is to be the actual result, is an act of His omniscient *mind*, which He need not explain to us; but His will, as defining what, in every case, would be the result most agreeable and welcome to Him, is an inherent part of His nature, and, as it were, a feature of His *heart*. In the one view, His will is consistent with many being impenitent and lost; in the other, it would have all men everywhere to repent and be saved. Now, it is into this latter will,—this will of the divine heart,—and not into the former, the will of the divine mind,—it is into what God, from his very nature, must and does desire, in reference to lost sinners, and not into what God, for ends and on principles as yet unknown, has decreed,—that the cross, as such, considered merely *objectively*, as presented to the eye, and not *subjectively*, as experienced and realized in the heart, gives mankind at large, and every individual, if he will but look, a clear, unequivocal, and most satisfying insight. To every individual, believer or not, elect or not, it is a proof and pledge of the Father's bowels of com-

passion yearning over him, and the Father's eye looking out for him, and the Father's arms open to embrace him freely, if he will be but moved to return; and to no individual, before he believes, is it, or can it be any thing more; to none does it beforehand impart any farther insight into the mind and will of God, as a warrant or encouragement to believe."

The distinction here supposed between the Divine heart and mind, in regard to man's salvation, appears quite unwarranted. It is arrived at, by contemplating the Divine manifestation in two different and incongruous aspects. The Divine *heart* is the character, which all men are called to form of God in this present life of probation; the Divine *mind*, contrasted with it, is reached by the contemplation of God's election in the Incomprehensible, which will not enter as a fact into the region of the creature, until the judgment. But God's character ought to be regarded in one or other of these aspects by itself, and not by confounding them together. View God wholly in the light of His Incomprehensible purpose of election, yet unmanifested; and the revelation of His heart, to which Dr Candlish refers, is found no longer in regard to the unbelieving: He will not manifest Himself to the finally impenitent and condemned in the character of a Father. Yet there will, in the eternal state, be a perfect revelation of His mind and heart, according to the condition of the objects. View Him wholly in the light of His dealings with men in

this life, and the revelation of mind and heart in harmony, is equally conspicuous for the ends of this life. It is not permissible to lose sight, as Dr Candlish has done, of the Infinity and Incomprehensibility of God, in considering His mode of dealing with a creature, spared under the effects of a moral fall, in an imperfect and probationary state. The revelation of both mind and heart, though in this life perfect for the creature's circumstances, and wholly just and true in itself, must be different in form and object, when the creature's condition shall have reached its maturity; and then the harmonious revelation of God's character will be perfect and unchangeable, though in a new form, suitable to man's changed condition.

The case put for the illustration of Dr Candlish's argument, appears to infer just the opposite conclusion. The supposed refusal of aid by the benevolent man to certain classes of paupers, was disciplinary on his part, in order to discourage idleness, and rouse to exertion; and his heart would find relief from the sense of the harshness of his refusal, by the anticipation of the ultimate good. But the actual case supposes, that the heart or love of God is vainly moved with pity towards His creatures; whilst his mind, or contriving and disposing Wisdom, does nothing to help them; nay has before doomed them to remediless destruction, by a necessity in their nature.

A vindication, which Dr Candlish afterwards gives of the Calvinistic principle, in its application towards

men, appears to involve equal difficulties with those, which we have just seen to attend it as viewed in reference to the purpose of the Deity. He says, (p. 19) :—“ To say, as some do, that the atonement, if held to have been undertaken for a certain number, cannot be a demonstration of love to all, is to confound the secret with the revealed will of God. Were the parties, whether few or many, for whom it is undertaken, named in the proclamation of it, it could not be a demonstration of good will to mankind generally, or to sinners indiscriminately as such. But, since what is revealed is simply the way of acceptance, or the principle on which God acts in justifying the ungodly, it seems plain, that to whomsoever such a revelation comes, with names and numbers suppressed, it is, in its very nature, a revelation of love.” This would be quite true, if election were in the Incomprehensible, and all men were admitted to be possessed of freewill, and to be under true probation, through possession of God’s grace by the atonement. But when the fixed destiny of men is brought out of the Incomprehensible, and held to be realized as a fact in defined individuals, and when the atonement is declared to have been provided for one class exclusively, does the case differ, in substance, from that of a sovereign’s proclamation of mercy to all rebels who should lay down their arms, but qualified by a secret list, put into the hands of the commander of his forces, of selected individuals

who alone were to be spared? No doubt, in the latter case, the deception would be discovered, whenever any not named surrendered themselves; while, in the former, the contrived necessity in the nature of the creatures would make the secret list, and the individuals who submit, exactly agree. But this surely adds to the difficulty, instead of obviating it. No one will maintain, that the revealed will of God is not as true, as His secret will; but this can be, only by its being true in relation to the nature and capabilities of the creatures, as well as in the Divine nature. The one infers the other.

The only other remark, which I shall make on the discussion of principles in this work,—and I refer more particularly to chapter second,—is, that the experience of an individual sinner in conversion, will go but a little way, in furnishing grounds for the Confession of a Church, which ought to be drawn from the whole of the Scriptures, and to present a full and enlarged view of God's ways towards men. The initiatory experience of an awakened sinner is in great part pure selfish fear. The exclamation of the jailor at Philippi,—“What shall I do to be saved?” presents a type of it. To draw from such a case, as Dr Candlish has done, evidence of a limited atonement, is to convert imperfection and infirmity into an oracle of truth. I have, in the sixth chapter, stated my reasons for thinking, that the exclusion of others forms no proper part of true faith. It may be asked,

if individuals are saved, of what consequence are propositions, which express God's relation to men generally? I would answer, that the salvation of individuals is not the end of the scheme of salvation, but the revelation of God, through the Church given to Christ; and that thus the salvation of individuals is accomplished; John xvii. 3. The right knowledge of God is essential to this end, for according to men's faith of what God's moral character is, so will they themselves become. If the perfect revelation to men of God's character be not held the end of faith, and if the mere deliverance of individuals shall be allowed to supersede this consideration,—and, still more, if erroneous representations of God's revealed character be adopted and vindicated in the church;—the evil will, sooner or later, return on men's own heads, through the corruption of the faith by which they hoped to be saved.

A modern modification of Calvinistic doctrine, is, that the atonement was not made by our Lord in the sense of substitution for sin, and the purchase of those for whom it was offered, but that it was an exhibition of God's character in Christ, viewed as suffering for the guilt of sin indefinitely, in order to enable Him, consistently with grounds of public justice, to show mercy in righteousness to as many as He pleased, and for this end to send to men the preached gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation through

Christ. This loose scheme unsettles the essential principles of the Divine plan as to the human race. The redemption of an election is inseparable from the idea of the manifestation of Christ. A unity in man is the essential character of the race; because God being One, made man as one, in His image, in order to reveal Himself. It was realized by man's creation in one root. It was exemplified by the fall of all in the head; and it was reasserted by the redemption of all by the Second Adam, the true head. The Gospel preached to all, as at once their trial and their deliverance, is the Gospel of a unity in Christ, or an election, whose sins He bears, as their substitute, whom he redeems with His blood, whom He sustains with His own life by His Spirit, and whom He will defend and bless for ever. It is true, that from the nature of man's probationary and imperfect state, not, as has been shewn, because of mere ignorance on our part of the fact, but because of a real uncertainty in the region and being of the creature, (with which uncertainty, certainty in the Incomprehensible purpose of God is nowise at variance), the election, as it will be ultimately revealed, is not seen or dealt with as such, and cannot be said yet to exist, at least as to the church-militant on the earth, in any sense intelligible to us. The whole world is called to enter into the Election by baptism; and the whole baptised Church is the Election for the present. The judgment will disclose the eternal Election, not by deny-

ing the reality of the atonement for all as the called Election, but, on the contrary, by the discovery of the falsehood of the unbelieving, when proved by the touchstone of its power. All these dispensations of God suppose an Election, as their object and consequence,—a unity of the redeemed in Christ, for whose sake all His acts are done.

It follows, that the opinion last-mentioned is erroneous, just in the opposite way from the Calvinistic, by sacrificing the absolute and eternal purpose of God to the interests of man, and making the end of redemption merely the salvation of so many individuals, instead of the disclosure of the Election of God, the seed of Christ, redeemed by Him, and united in Him by His Spirit, as one, for the revelation of His glory.

I shall conclude with some observations on the nature of the evidence which the Scriptures afford, as to the universality of the Atonement. It does not fall within the plan of this work to present this evidence in detail. Its purpose, in reference to this subject, has been, to arrive at such general conclusions, founded on man's nature and circumstances,—more especially as these are unfolded in the Scriptures,—as ought to be kept in view, in the exposition of the passages which bear upon the question. What follows will continue mostly of the same character.

The Calvinistic hypothesis of realized reprobacy and infallible grace, as present facts in two defined

classes of mankind, must, it is evident, lead to a very different interpretation of the Scriptures in reference to men's condition, from that which will be applied by one who believes, that all men are in this life under grace, in a true creature condition of probation. This may be illustrated by an imaginary case:—

Suppose that an influential person had, after much exertion, obtained valuable appointments for two lads, sons of a family, on which they would enter on coming to suitable ages. His confidential steward writes their father of his success; explains the nature and advantages of the appointments; describes the qualifications which the lads must acquire, and which ordinary abilities, if honestly applied, will master; and heartily congratulates the family on their good fortune. The family receive the benefit with gratitude, and count the prospect as a real acquisition. Now, suppose that one of the sons receives his appointment, but that the other turns out ill; that the steward had so expressed his letters, as to shew that good conduct was an implied condition of the whole arrangement, and that it lay with the boys themselves to render the appointments available; and that at last, through the lad's reckless misconduct, he is found unfit for the appointment, which is cancelled. The question is, Has the issue any effect on what went before? Does the predetermined certainty, (for so it was upon Calvinistic principles,) that one of the sons should obtain the office secured for him, and that the other should

forfeit his, render all that preceded, a reality as to the one, but an unreality as to the other, so as to make it necessary to construe all the past letters and feelings of the parties, in a sense different from what the current state of their views had given rise to, and corrected according to the facts as they ultimately emerged?

It appears to me, that this case affords a just parallel (making allowance for the extreme dissimilarity of the subjects) to the circumstances attending the transmission to the Churches of the Apostolical Epistles; on these grounds—that man's state in this world is a real probationary creature state—that God acts towards man in the full recognition of this state—that the gifts, hopes, and promises conferred by Him on the Church are realities to all her members, and are truly within the power of all to whom the gospel is preached—and that the inspiration of the apostles did not require or enable them to address the Churches, otherwise than in order to express their Lord's will towards them, and the individuals of whom they were composed, according to the recognition just mentioned, and by no means on the footing, that every word they uttered, in the truth, and under the natural feelings of this position, is to be held qualified by a secret retractation or reversal, derived from the incomprehensible and still unmanifested will of God, as it shall be found, at the judgment, to bear upon men's final and concluded state of heart. In order to confine my illustrations

within moderate bounds, I shall support what has been said, by what appears the general scope of the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.

In the first three chapters, the apostle shews, that the whole world,—both the Gentiles, who were without an express revelation, and the Jews, the channel into which the stream of revelation had been ultimately gathered,—were alike, after the flesh, or the strength of the natural man, wholly corrupt and unprofitable, “in order that *every mouth* may be stopped, and *all the world* may become guilty before God.” He then points out, that salvation from this condition, without the law, is declared, “by faith of Jesus Christ, *unto all, and upon all them that believe*; for there is no difference,—for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,—being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” iii. 22-4. In the fourth chapter, he describes the nature of faith—the true way of salvation—chiefly by the type of Abraham’s trials, and shews, that its essence lies in the utter renunciation by man of trust in creature strength, and in trust, instead, in the grace and power of God only. And in chapter v. 1-11, he sets forth the peace, hope, joy, and certainty of the salvation, thus accomplished by means of faith in Christ, after escape from the death of the fleshly state.

Having thus brought to a close his general explanation of man’s condition in the flesh, and of the grace for deliverance from it, the apostle, in the rest of the

chapter, verses 12-21, gives a summary of the principles involved in the previous parts of the Epistle. He explains that the universal death had come by Adam; and, viewing men as being all under its power, he proceeds to contrast its features with the deliverance just discoursed of—the grace for universal justification unto life through faith, by Christ, the Second Adam. In all the contrasted views of the “sin,” the “death,” and the “judgment,” on the one side, and the “free gift,” the “grace of God, and the gift by grace,” the “gift of righteousness,” and “the free gift unto justification of life,” on the other, the apostle expresses the act on God’s part in Christ towards men, represented by the latter class of terms, as superabounding over the evil in man, derived from Adam, expressed by the former class. Nay, he proceeds, in verses 20-1, to say, that the law itself, which, since it addressed the flesh, or man’s natural strength, could only bring out deeper testimonies of its corruption, so as to secure its perfect renunciation, caused grace still more to abound for that end. “Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In chapter sixth, the apostle, starting with the question, Whether salvation by grace would warrant continuance in sin? answers it, by explaining more ex-

actly the character of salvation by faith, and by shewing, that it comes through the death of the natural man by our baptism into Christ, in whose death the natural man was crucified. Hence he points out, that return to sin by a baptised person, involves a self-contradiction of his standing by faith. In chapter seventh, the apostle continues the subject, by insisting on our death to the law "by the body of Christ;" that is, through the slaying, by His sacrifice, of the natural man, which was subject to the law. He then meets the possible misconception, that the law was evil, by pointing out, that the evil lies only in the corrupt action of the natural man, which was detected and made manifest, whenever the law tried it; and that this, on the contrary, proved that the law was holy, just, and good. All this part of the subject he illustrates by an application to his own personal case; for he had in him the consciousness of the common death through the flesh. "Who shall deliver me," he cries, "from the body of this death?" and he concludes with rejoicing in perfect deliverance from this state by Christ. Then, finally, in chapter eighth, after having gone through the whole plan, and shewed the snares and trials of the way, he surveys the position arrived at, in the light of the principles he had explained, and expatiates, in a tone of high spiritual feeling, on the duties, the dangers, the hopes, and the encouragements attendant on it, with the assurance of ultimate victory. Near the conclusion of the chapter, versés 28-30, the

apostle says, that all the trials of this life will “work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose;” to which he adds the positive assurance of the eternal Election, who are foreknown, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified of God.

Throughout these chapters, the apostle, very much after an abstract way, though with constant reference to the experience of himself and the Church, describes the universal death unto sin in Adam, the universal provision of escape from it by faith in Christ, with the consequences of abiding in sin, the power of which had been destroyed in Christ, on the one hand, and the experience of those who, though in weakness, persevered in faith, on the other. He supposes men to be under a true creature state of probation, having grace for justification unto salvation freely given them therein, and as either abusing the grace, or living in it unto salvation. In chapter sixth, he faithfully points out the opposite eternal issues of righteousness and unrighteousness. And in chapter eighth, even when dwelling mainly on an established spiritual state, he is careful to shew, that the danger was as real as ever, and that faithfulness only would ensure the victory. “To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, *if so be* that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” Nothing, surely, but the application to the detached verses of a logical

test, implying, from the Divine incomprehensible purpose, the unreality of the present life, can give this profound, comprehensive, and animated discourse any other meaning, than that of setting forth God's manifested will of universal grace for salvation by faith out of the fallen state, as now at length realized in the world by the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, and declared by the apostle for the blessing and trial of all, specially of the Church, which had entered upon its full privileges and responsibilities. The denial of the universality of the Atonement, which is the sole foundation of faith, appears fatal to the whole of the apostle's doctrine.

The explicit reference near the close to God's election, I need hardly say, does not militate against this conclusion. As well might it be said, that the declaration in chapter iii. 22, of salvation by faith of Christ, "unto all and upon all them that believe," is a limitation of the grace of the gospel. Since faith is the declared mode of universal salvation, opposed to universal death in Adam, and open to all, it is self-evident, that the state of faith was the only means of obtaining the benefit. And faith, as was shewn at the conclusion of chapter sixth, itself involves the admission of an election on God's part, and is tested and strengthened by the necessity of making this admission. The full declaration of an election was, therefore, an appropriate, and even an indispensable, conclusion, to the Apostle's exposition of the universal

way of salvation by faith, from its beginning to its final triumph. His end in setting forth the Election, was the trial, the confession, and the comfort of faith, in the righteous towards God: it was not to bring down into man's place the incomprehensible and unmanifested will of God, so as to evacuate of substance his true creature state. Doubtless, at the same time, the conviction in the Apostle's mind, of the reality of an Election, in whom should be perfectly fulfilled all the truth he was commissioned to utter, would remove from his mind every thing of the character of vague and undefined generality, while he was declaring that truth, as God's free gift to the Church and world at large.

I shall conclude the notice of this passage of Scripture, with some remarks on the contrast in chapter v. 12-21, between the sin on man's part, and the grace on the part of God, which, as has been already mentioned, seems to present an epitome of what had gone before. The abrupt, yet connected manner, in which the Apostle introduces mention of death by Adam, shows that it was a resumption of the subject, —“ *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.*” There is no contrast put at the beginning of the passage. The introduction, in verses 12-4, sets forth exclusively the universality of death by Adam, “ *who is the figure of him that was to come.*” The contrast then proceeds, between the effects of the fall in Adam, and the remedy in

Christ, and embraces, one would naturally suppose, the whole of those in the condition that gives rise to it. There is not a word to cause any doubt of this. The 18th verse expresses the universality on both sides in unambiguous terms, and explains the indefiniteness of previous verses. No known use of language warrants the limitation of the apostle's words; and their plain meaning is rejected, only because a system requires it. If, as Dr Candlish maintains, (Prel. Diss. p. 15), the apostle's object was merely to state the principle of headship, and not the extent which the blessing covered, he must be held guilty of incredible carelessness, for the contrast is in all points put without qualification. But this construction is opposed, both by the context and the passage itself. The death, out of which it was necessary to escape, and the faith, which was the way of escape, are unequivocally set forth, at the beginning of the Epistle, as alike applicable to all. The contrast in each verse, in a form either express or implied, is between the sin and death in all, and the grace to all. It cannot be between the sin of the non-elect, and the grace to the elect; for this would be unmeaning. Still less, can it be between the sin of the elect, and the grace to them; for this would contradict the antithesis, on the Calvinistic principle, as well as the universality, announced at the beginning, and assumed throughout the whole passage. Dr Candlish objects to the universality of the effect, on the side of grace, on the ground, that

imputation means, that the result of the trial of each head must “be actually and in fact communicated to all whom he represents;”—that is, that the Calvinistic principle must be assumed,—which is to beg the question. But the death in Adam embraces *all men* without exception:—“death passed upon *all men*, for that all have sinned.” The natural consequence, according to this construction, was pointed out at p. 161, above. But this shows, that the death in Adam here referred to, is not completed spiritual death: it is the death set forth in chapters i.-iii, in order to drive men to salvation by faith; which death, as was shown in the third section, applied to the faithful equally with the unfaithful. The gift to those *in this death*, forms one side of the antithesis. The farther death is effectually intercepted as to all men, during the time of grace in this life, by the sacrifice of Christ. And, therefore, keeping his eye fixed on this, as being the condition of men, the apostle accordingly declares, that “the free gift,” “the grace of God and the gift by grace,” and “the free gift unto justification of life,” are co-extensive in Christ for all men, with the death, under which all men are lying. In other words, he sets forth this present life, as a time of probation for all, under the grace of a universal atonement, in conformity with the scope of the whole passage and context. It must not be supposed, that a gift is the less real, on God’s part, and in man, because it may be ultimately rejected by some of those to

whom it is given, and become void to them, and the ground of condemnation, through their falsehood. To deny this, is to deny the reality of creature existence, by holding it swallowed up and lost in the immensity of the being of the Creator.

Another supposed case will make the point clearer than farther abstract comments. A sovereign grants a free pardon to a number of his subjects, who are in prison, under capital sentence, for treason; requiring only, that each subscribe a declaration of sorrow for his offence, and an obligation to be a faithful subject in future. The Jail Chaplain assembles the prisoners, and communicates to them the pardon, with its condition. He speaks of the clemency of the sovereign, of the guilt of their crime, and of the misery it was calculated to inflict both on their country and themselves; and he heartily congratulates them on their escape. He reminds them of the duties which now lie on them, and of the blessings within their reach, for themselves and their families, by the fulfilment of their callings, under the protection of orderly government. He says little expressly of the condition, but his whole address and all the circumstances imply it; and, even though he suspects that there are some wrongheaded individuals among the prisoners, who may throw away their lives, rather than agree to it, he judges that his dwelling on the substantial truth and reason of the case, will be more appropriate to the occasion, than direct individual

appeals ; yet he takes occasion to paint the consequences of wilful persistence in the delinquency, in the most unequivocal and decided terms, but with a delicacy prompted by his being unwilling to suppose it possible, that any of them would be so mad as to be in such a predicament. Some of the prisoners refuse the condition, and are executed. I ask,—was not the pardon a reality for all? and were the Chaplain's congratulations, advices, and encouragements, not true expressions of his feelings in regard to one and all, because some ultimately nullified what was in their power, or rather their possession, by wilful perverseness? It may be answered, that what is true as to a case in earthly life, cannot be applied to the word of an inspired Apostle, declaring infallible truth to men, in reference to their eternal destiny. Is, then, this life less real to all men for eternal interests, than to the supposed prisoners for temporal? Is the gospel less true to the former, than the free pardon was to the latter? Is the earthly sovereign's mercy more genuine, than that of the God of mercy? Are the words of the Apostle, in the name of his Lord, less charged with truth, sympathy and faithfulness, than those of the representative of the earthly sovereign? In all these respects, surely, the real case is far stronger than the supposed one. The essential difference between them,—of the former involving the supreme will of God, and eternal interests,—instead of weakening this conclusion, forms the ground of it,—*provided the present*

life of man is recognised to be real, and not fictitious,— in proof of which I need add nothing to what has been already stated.

If the principles of construction, applied to the Epistle to the Romans, are just, conclusions exactly similar, as to the bearing of the gospel, and of the Atonement, which is its ground, upon the whole Church, and all men, may be drawn from all the other Apostolical Epistles.

The particular passages of Scripture, which declare, or imply, the universality of the Atonement, are extremely numerous. How can it be otherwise, when the Atonement is the expression to men of God's love to them? The grounds, on which attempts are made (generally with obvious subtlety or violence), to explain them away, and thus to remove from the Scriptures all effective evidence of that love, as a universal truth, owe their force to the preliminary assumption of the Calvinistic principle, which has been examined in the foregoing pages. On that assumption, an unanswerable objection of course lies to the apparent meaning of such passages, and it becomes necessary to believe, that the true meaning is different. The hard and artificial interpretations, to which recourse is had, in order to bring out a meaning in conformity with the assumption, and which exchange for the natural flow of feeling, and the hearty expression of faith and love, the subtle, technical and abstract methods of analysis and argument, which may be found

applied in law courts to the construction of Acts of Parliament, afford of themselves a strong presumption against them. Remove that assumption, and substitute the opposite ; and the passages then resume their natural force ; and the reason then appears evident, why the Apostles, in the fulness of the love of God to all men, which it was their privilege to feel and to declare, were, at times, carried beyond the strict need of their argument, to give utterance, in the largest form, to this blessed truth. This circumstance is much used, in order to support a critical rule of construction, for obviating the force of some of the passages, but without justice.

The love of the Father, “who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” and “who so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son” into it, as “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world ;”—the act of the Son, in the common nature of man, and therefore in its very essence universal ;—the work of the Spirit, which is of so universal a character, that the disobedient, it is said, “do despite” to Him, and “defile the temple of God,” in themselves ;—and the preservation of men by the grace of God, whose thoughts towards us are “thoughts of peace, and not of evil ;”—all combine their testimony, as abundantly appears from the Scriptures, to the universal grace of God towards mankind, and, consequently, to the universal application to men of the Atonement, the expression and channel of all grace.

While passages of Scripture, which express the universality of the Atonement for men in this life, are irreconcilable with its limitation to one class of men; on the other hand, the numerous and unequivocal passages, which contemplate its ultimate and exclusive relation for blessing to the redeemed, when the final purpose of God shall be unfolded at the judgment, are not at all inconsistent with its present universality; on the contrary, they are indispensable for declaring the perfect truth of God, for the probation of men.

But it is apart from the object of this work, to dwell on the testimony of the Scriptures to the universality of the Atonement. If the aim of the foregoing pages has been successful, in showing, that, both by the testimony of the Scriptures, and in point of fact, this present life is a reality for men, in the only way in which it can deserve to be termed so,—*by their being under the grace of God for true probation*,—it cannot but be regarded as a self-evident corollary from this position, or rather, as its indispensable foundation, that the grace of the Atonement, the highest act of God's grace towards men, and the ground of all other grace, must rest upon all men without exception.

THE END.









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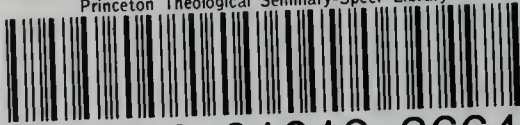
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